

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR COLORECTAL SURGEON & OSTOMY NURSE

Before ostomy surgery, there are many questions that you and your loved ones may have about **what is an ostomy** and how it works. To get a general overview as a new ostomate about what to expect, please refer to the [New Ostomy Patient Guide](#) and [Ostomy 101 Infographic](#).



General Pre-Surgery Questions

Below are general pre-surgery questions that you may want to ask your colorectal surgeon and/or ostomy nurse:

How does an ostomy work?

- What is the best way to empty the pouch?
- How do I clean the pouch?
- What will the stool that comes from the ileostomy or colostomy look like?
- How many times a day will I need to empty it?
- Should I expect an odor or smell?



Emotional aspects of living with an ostomy

Patients and caregivers may also have questions about returning to their daily routine and the psychosocial aspects of living with an ostomy. (Please refer to ostomy.org/emotional-issues)

- When can I go back to work?
- When will I be able to wear the same clothes as before?
- When will I be able to travel?
- When can I take showers? Can I take a bath? Do I need to wear the pouch when I bathe?
- When can I play sports?
- When can I go swimming?
- Are there any support groups and/or counselors who can help me adjust during this time?



Logistical questions

Before and after ostomy surgery, you may have logistical questions about the workings of your stoma.

- How do I change my ostomy appliance? (UOAA resource: [How to Change Your Ostomy Pouch](#))
- How often do I need to change it?
- What supplies do I need, and where can I get them?
- How much do supplies cost?
- What should my stoma look like when it is healthy?
- When should I contact my doctor, ostomy nurse, or go to the ER with concerns?
- How should I care for the stoma every day?
- How often should I clean it?
- What types of tape, creams, or paste can I use around the stoma?

Specific Post-Surgery Questions

Below are specific questions about life with inflammatory bowel disease post-surgery:



Questions for your surgeon or gastroenterologist

Every patient's situation is unique so it is best to discuss with your surgeon and/or gastroenterologist:

- What are the potential complications of having stoma surgery?
- Is there still a risk of IBD continuing after ostomy surgery?
- Will I face issues with nutrition and hydration after ostomy surgery?
- Do I need to change the medicines I am taking to liquid or injectable forms?
- Will birth control pills still work?
- How do I prevent dehydration?
- Are there foods that may cause blockage of the stoma or opening? How can I change my diet to prevent this problem?
- How do I know if I'm having a blockage or complication that requires immediate medical attention?



Sex, family planning and pregnancy

Patients and their partners may also have concerns about sex, family planning, and pregnancy with an ostomy. It's always best to bring these questions forward to help alleviate any concerns. (Please refer to the [Intimacy after Ostomy Surgery Guide](#) for additional information)

- When can I start having intercourse again after ostomy surgery?
- Does having stoma surgery affect fertility?
- Will my partner or I be able to conceive and carry a pregnancy after ostomy surgery?



Diet and nutrition with an ostomy

This is where a registered dietitian comes into the picture and can really help to maximize nutrition and absorption: (Please refer to the UOAA's [Eating With an Ostomy](#) Guide) Individual sensitivity to certain foods varies greatly.

- What changes do I need to make in my diet and for how long?
- How do I make sure I'm getting the nutrition I need?
- What can I do if my stools are too loose? Are there foods that will make my stools more firm?
- What can I do if my stools are too hard? Are there foods that will make my stools looser or more watery? Do I need to drink more liquids?



**We Are Here For You.
Support, Education,
Resources, Advocacy**

**United Ostomy Associations of America
P.O. Box 525 Kennebunk, ME 04043
800-826-0826 | WWW.OSTOMY.ORG**

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