

Dr David A Clark

MBBS(Qld) FRACS FRCSEd

General & Colorectal Surgery
Upper GI Endoscopy & Colonoscopy
ABN: 68 676 182 920

Wesley Medical Centre
40 Chaselly Street
Auchenflower 4066

Provider No: 2029033W

Phone: 3350 2088
Fax: 3350 2333

All correspondence to:
Holy Spirit Northside
Medical Centre
627 Rode Road
Chermside 4032

Ostomy :- (Colostomy or Ileostomy)

What is an ostomy?

The word "ostomy" is derived from Greek and means a surgically created opening connecting an internal organ to the surface of the body. Different kinds of ostomies are named for the organ involved.

The most common types of ostomies in intestinal surgery are an "ileostomy" (connecting the small intestine to the skin) and a "colostomy" (connecting the large intestine to the skin).

An ostomy may be temporary or permanent. A temporary ostomy may be required if the intestinal tract can't be properly prepared for surgery because of blockage by disease or scar tissue. A temporary ostomy may also be created to allow a disease process or operative site to heal without irritation by the passage of stool. Temporary ostomies can usually be reversed with minimal or no loss of intestinal function.

A permanent ostomy may be required when disease, or its treatment, impairs normal intestinal function, or when the muscles that control the rectum do not work properly or require removal. The most common causes of these conditions are low rectal cancer and inflammatory bowel disease.

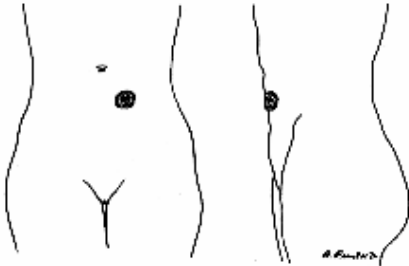


Figure 1: An ostomy connects either the small or the large intestine to the surface of the body.

How will I control my movements?

Once your ostomy has been created, your stomal therapist (a nurse who specialises in ostomy care) will teach you to apply and wear a pouch called a stoma appliance. The pouch is made of a special form of plastic which is held to the body with an adhesive skin barrier. Many sizes and styles of ostomy pouches are available. The pouch is disposable and is emptied or changed as needed. The system is quite secure; "accidents" are not common, and the pouches are odour-free. The frequency of your bowel movements will vary, depending on the type of ostomy you have, your diet, and your bowel habits prior to surgery. If the ostomy is a colostomy, irrigation techniques may be learned which allow for increased control over the timing of bowel movements.

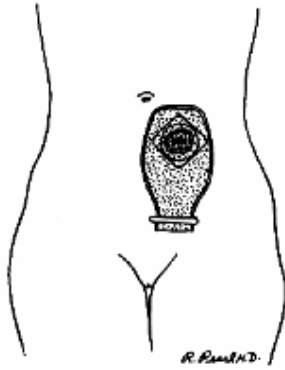


Figure 1: An ostomy appliance is a plastic pouch, held to the body with an adhesive skin barrier, that provides secure and odour-free control of bowel movements.

Will my physical activities be limited?

The answer to this question is usually an emphatic NO! You may have friends or acquaintances who have an ostomy of which you are unaware. Public figures, prominent entertainers, and even professional athletes have ostomies that do not significantly limit their activities. All your usual activities, including active sports, may be resumed once healing from surgery is complete.

Will an ostomy affect my sex life?

Most patients with ostomies resume their usual sexual activity. In men, removal of the lower rectum for cancer may result in sexual dysfunction due to injury to nerves that pass close to the rectum. This is unrelated to the ostomy. Many people with ostomies worry about how their sexual partner will think of them because of their appliance. This perceived change in one's body image can be overcome by a strong relationship, time and patience. Support groups are also available.

It is often comforting and reassuring for a patient who is facing a permanent ostomy to visit with another person who has already been through the surgery and adjusted to his or her ostomy. Such visits can often be coordinated by your stomal therapist.

If circumstances dictate the need for an ostomy, it is likely that you will return to a fulfilling lifestyle. With the skill and support of a colon and rectal surgeon and stomal therapist, one can cope with either a temporary or permanent ostomy and resume a normal life.

Contacts:

Brisbane Ostomate Support Visitor Service PO Box 370 Chermside South. 4032.	0500 51 54 51
Queensland Stoma Association	07 3359 7570
Queensland Colostomy Association	07 3848 7178
Sr Pat Walls (Holy Spirit Northside)	0410 695 847
Sr Brenda Sando (Wesley Hospital)	07 3232 7000 (and page through switch)