

It's a start

Ileostomy | Pre-Op



*Bringing comfort and clarity to the what, why and how of your ileostomy surgery*



A Bigger Life



# Your ileostomy

The prospect of surgery can be a scary thing, but it helps to know what to expect so you aren't worrying and stressing too much. The more informed that you are the more you will feel in control of managing your new stoma. It's natural to have a lot of questions and concerns. This guide will help you adapt to living with your new stoma and help you live your bigger life.

The information is general and some of it may not apply to you, but you can visit [abiggerlife.com](http://abiggerlife.com) for more information and support from others who have been through a similar situation as you.

Your Stoma Care Nurse will be there to support you through your journey pre and post surgery. You can note the name and contact details of your Stoma Nurse below.

*My Stoma Care Nurse:*

.....

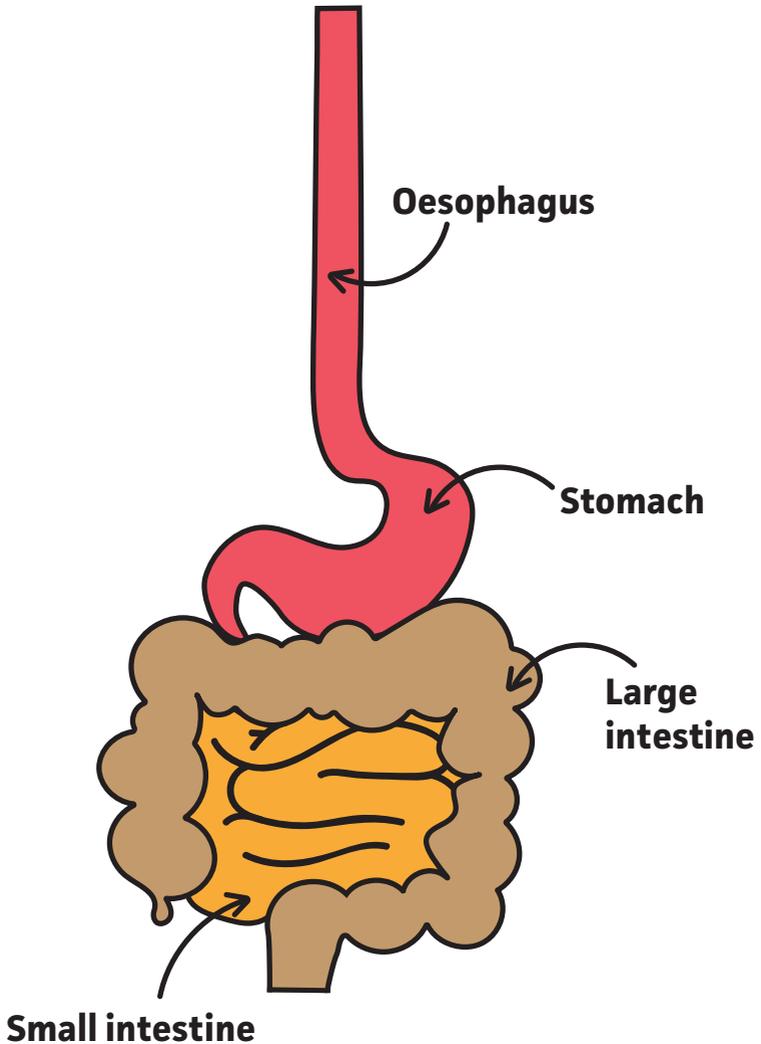
*Contact Details:*

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# Your digestive system

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# Your stoma

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## What is an ileostomy?

The type of stoma you will be having is called an ileostomy. An ileostomy is formed when a surgeon brings a piece of your bowel onto your tummy, creating an opening outside your body. After surgery, you will pass bowel motions through your stoma and will not be able to control when this occurs. To help with this a pouch is worn outside of your tummy to collect the waste. An ileostomy can be either permanent or temporary.

## Where will my stoma be?

An ileostomy is usually on the right-hand side of your tummy.

## What will my stoma look and feel like?

Your stoma will be red and shiny in colour. There are no nerve endings in a stoma, so you will feel no pain from it. If you run your tongue inside your cheek, that is what your stoma will feel like, red, healthy, shiny and warm. Your stoma may be swollen to begin with but it will reduce in time, usually between 6-8 weeks after surgery.



Lisa, ostomate since 2011.



# Your pouch

## How does my pouch work?

Your output will alter between being loose to semi solid, because of this you will wear a drainable pouch that empties at the bottom. The bag is designed to stick onto your abdomen where it will collect the output from your ileostomy.

## What does my pouch look like?



One-Piece  
drainable pouch



Two-Piece  
drainable pouch



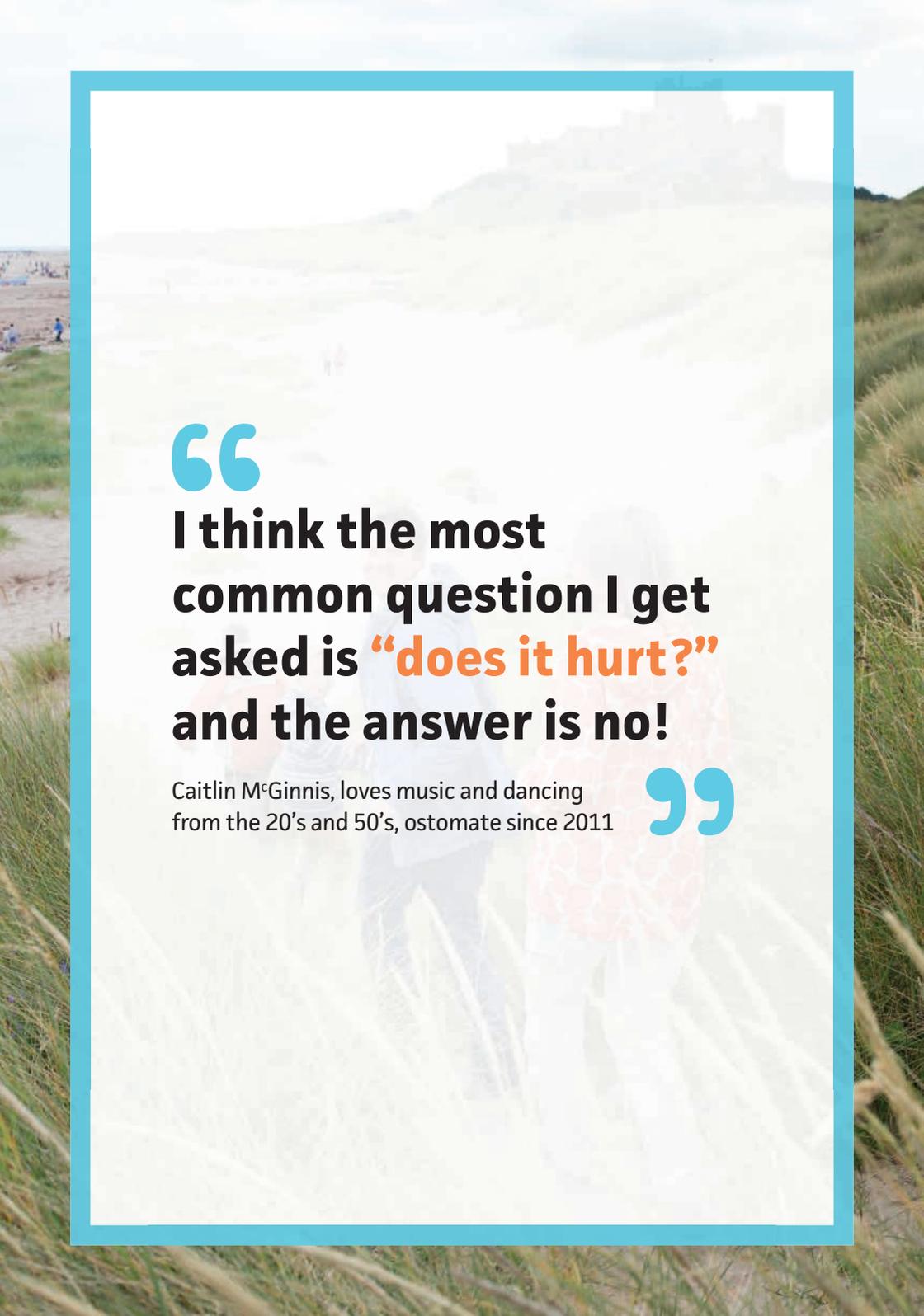
Baseplate front



Baseplate back

## How often do I need to change or empty my pouch?

You will change your pouch every day or every other day, but you'll have to empty it several times a day. For some people you may be able to keep it on for 3 days at a time.



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**I think the most common question I get asked is “does it hurt?” and the answer is no!**

Caitlin McGinnis, loves music and dancing from the 20's and 50's, ostomate since 2011

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# Your hospital stay

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## How long will I be in hospital?

The length of stay will be around 7-10 days if you have an uneventful recovery. If you have been unwell before your surgery, your length of stay might be slightly increased.

You may be discharged earlier than 7 days if your recovery goes quickly or if you are part of an enhanced recovery programme.

## How long will I be off work?

This will vary from person to person, we are all different, with different capacities for healing and recovering. After 6-8 weeks you will be starting to think about going back to work. From around 2 months you will be able to get back to work.

However, if your job involves heavy lifting or manual handling you might need to leave it 3-6 months to allow your abdominal muscles to heal properly. You should discuss going back to work with your healthcare team but ultimately, only you can decide when, listen to what your body is telling you.

# Hospital bag must haves

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**Now that you have a date planned for your surgery you may be wondering what to bring to the hospital.**

***Below are a few hints and tips to help you with your packing list.***

- Tick these off to help when packing.
- Comfy short sleeve pyjamas or a nightdress.
- Slippers.
- A notepad and pen for recording any thoughts, queries or concerns that you have. This means when the nurse visits you can talk to them about your concerns or questions.
- Music and books will help you relax and keep you entertained during your stay.
- All your normal toiletries but another little extra would be lip balm. The atmosphere in hospitals is very dry and can make your lips cracked and uncomfortable.
- A list of your medications and past medical history.
- Mobile phone and charger along with a list of contact numbers for family and friends.
- Extra underwear, maybe even a size bigger so they are comfortable. After surgery your abdomen will be a bit more swollen than normal, so you don't want to wear anything too restricting.
- Earplugs and an eye mask. Hospitals are busy and noisy places. If you can get a good night's sleep it will help your recovery and recuperation.

**“ I really hope this helps anyone who's walking into surgery and doesn't know what to bring; more importantly I want you to know that you've got an entire community out there that stands with you ”**

Saleem Juma, works out a lot, plays lots and lots of video games, ostomate since 2013.



# Preparing for surgery: so many questions

If you have any questions, concerns or worries it is important to **ASK** your surgeon or stoma nurse prior to surgery! It's one of the best ways to prepare yourself (especially mentally) for surgery.

*Here are a list of suggested questions you might want to ask.*

## For your surgeon

- How will they perform surgery – keyhole or open?
- How long does the procedure take?
- What sort of pain relief will I have?
- Will I still need to take any medication post-surgery?
- Will I still have the urge to go to the toilet?
- Will I still be able to have children?

## For your stoma nurse

- How often should I empty and change my appliance?
- Eating and drinking - what can/can't I eat and drink, how long for?
- What can I do post-surgery?
- How do I order my supplies?





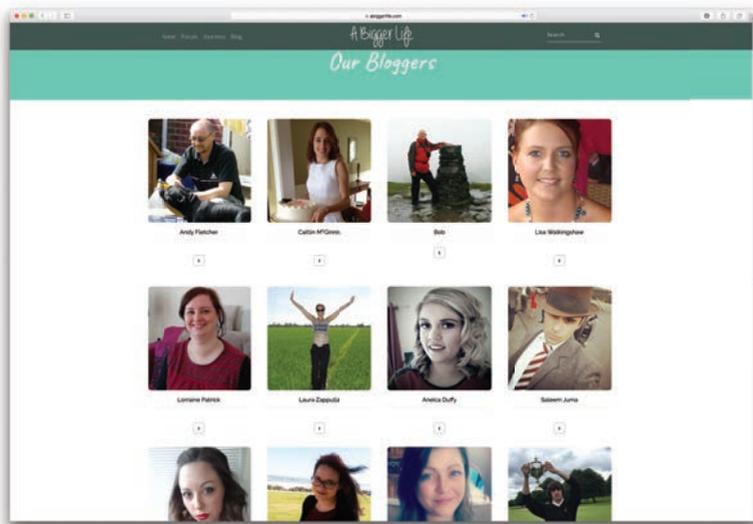
**“I like that people with ostomies are called ‘ostomates’ and the friendly connotation that mate has about it”**

Laura Zappulla, loves to travel and go on adventures all over the world, ostomate since 2013.

# Find out about other people's stories on [abiggerlife.com](http://abiggerlife.com)

Speaking with others who have been through the same surgery as you are about to go through can be invaluable, but remember that everyone's experience is different.

If you would like to talk to others you can visit [abiggerlife.com](http://abiggerlife.com) for support and real life experiences.



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Visit today [abiggerlife.com](https://www.abiggerlife.com)

A warm and friendly space you can visit any time of day or night and keep coming back to. You, the person, are important. A stoma shouldn't define you, it is just a small part of a bigger life. We're here to bring together support, encouragement, information and engagement in pursuit of that bigger life.

