

Caring for a loved one with an ostomy



The ultimate aim for anyone with a stoma is to be independent, however this is not always possible. There are times when someone else needs to be involved in the short term or indefinitely. Here are some hints and tips for carers:

- 1 Be involved right from the beginning. The more practise you get the more confident you become.


- 2 Whilst your loved one is in hospital, ask the Stomal Therapy Nurse or the ward based staff to supervise you on lots of occasions prior to discharge.


- 3 Practise unsupervised at least once before you and your loved one go home.


- 4 Ask for a step by step guide to help you remember the important points.



- 5 Organise an area at home where the stoma supplies can be kept. A cool dry area is best – maybe in a wardrobe or small plastic box. Easy to see and reach and have everything together.



- 6 Find a comfortable area for you and your loved one. The bedroom or bathroom is fine. Whatever makes it easier is the most important aspect.



- 7 Life being as it is, things don't always go to plan, just in case, protect your bed with a waterproof mattress protector. Also, just in case, using a plastic bag as an apron is ideal for bag change especially if the stoma decides to be active at this time.




- 8 Talk about it. It's great that you are willing to help – but have a backup plan. Involve another members of the family or an agency of carers. Carers need support too and a day off.


- 9 Contact your local Stomal Therapy Nurse if any problems develop.


- 10 As days go by, the physical aspects of looking after and managing a stoma becomes easier. The hardest part of being a carer and a partner of a loved one is the emotional and psychological impact on each person.


- 11 When someone's had stoma surgery they experience a full range of emotions and the same can be said for their carer. Of course the best advice is to be honest but this is not always the easiest in practise. You want to be able to care for your loved one, but you might not feel able to. In this instance seek help or support from another family member or team of carers. You need to be able to maintain your relationship whilst supporting them through illness and towards recovery.


- 12 "The patient" may feel that they are a burden or a problem and a complication to normal family life. This takes time to work through and every family has different ways of dealing with difficult situations. You will have stressful days and days where everything goes to plan. Isn't this true with life in general? Be grateful for the good days and reach out for help on the bad days.

