

Instructions After Ostomy Closure

Your stoma has now been closed (reversed), and you have started to have bowel movements. There may be some differences, depending on the type of surgery you had when your stoma was created. These basic guidelines are provided to help you as you regain bowel function. For specific questions related to your surgery, please contact us at 312-942-7088.

Bowel function

At first, you may have loose or soft stools. It usually takes some weeks for regular intestinal activity to return. As time goes on, normal bowel function will return. This, however, depends on the amount of colon that was removed during surgery and whether radiation treatments were given. The colon absorbs water from the liquid stool coming from the small intestine. The more colon you have left, the thicker your stool may be. As your body adjusts, your bowel movements will also. During this time, dietary changes, fiber supplements, medications, and perianal skin care may help.

- 2-3 bowel movements per day is the usual goal after closure of your stoma.
- A low residue diet can help reduce the frequency and volume of stools during this period.
- A fiber supplementation may also be started to help thicken the stools. Metamucil, Benefiber, Citrucel, etc. are over the counter supplements that often help.
- Medications that slow the bowel are often useful. Imodium and Lomotil are commonly used. They are available in liquid or pill form. Imodium is available over the counter, while Lomotil requires a prescription. Start with 1-2 doses per day. You can adjust the dose up to 6-8 doses per day but many people will become constipated if they take too much.
- The skin around your anus can become irritated due to frequent loose stools and wiping. Clean carefully after each movement with soft wipes. Wash with a mild soap and warm water, and gently dry with a soft cloth. A zinc based ointment such as Calmoseptine may be applied to the skin three times a day as needed to help protect the skin.

Please call us:

- if you continue to have more than 5-6 bowel movements per day
- perianal rash, sores, or itching
- difficulty passing gas without leakage of stool
- inability to hold your stool causing accidents, or
- bright red blood with bowel movements.

It is important that you do not start any medications unless directed by your physician. Please call with any additional questions or concerns 312-942-7088.

Patient information materials developed in the Section of Colon and Rectal Surgery at Rush University Medical Center. The information contained in this brochure is believed to be accurate; however, questions about your individual health should be referred to your physician.

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