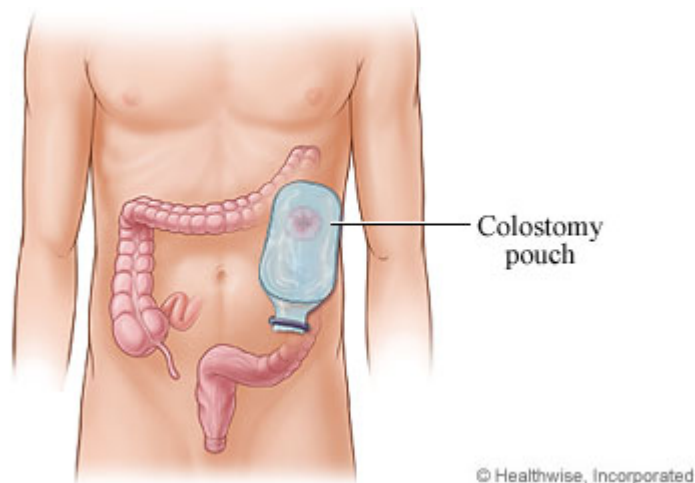


Living with a Colostomy

What is a colostomy?

A colostomy is a surgically created opening in the abdomen in which a piece of the colon (large intestine) is brought outside the abdominal wall to create a stoma through which digested food passes into an external pouching system. A colostomy is created when a portion of the colon or rectum is removed due to a disease process or damaged area of the colon. Some diseases which would cause this surgery are cancers, inflammatory bowel disease, trauma, diverticulitis.



Colostomies can either be:

- a) **Temporary:** Your surgeon may be required to create a colostomy to give a portion of the bowel a chance to rest and heal. When healing has occurred, the colostomy can be reversed, and normal bowel function restored.
- b) **Permanent:** When part of the colon or the rectum becomes diseased, a long-term (permanent) colostomy must be made. The diseased part of the bowel is removed or permanently rested. In this case, the colostomy is not expected to be closed in the future.

Care of your Colostomy

A **pouching system** is usually worn. Pouches are odor free and different manufacturers have disposable or reusable varieties to fit one's lifestyle. While in hospital you will be seen by an ostomy nurse who will help you to determine which ostomy supplies best suit you and they will teach you how to care for your colostomy.

The Government of Ontario has a Funding for Ostomy Grant. It is available to any Ontario citizen who will have a colostomy for longer than 6 months. The North Bay General Surgery office has all the paperwork and can assist you filling out the forms.

Living with a Colostomy

Work: With the possible exception of jobs requiring very heavy lifting, a colostomy should not interfere with work. People with colostomies are successful business people, teachers, carpenters, welders, etc.

Sex and social life: Physically, the creation of a colostomy usually does not affect sexual function. If there is a problem, it is almost always related to the removal of the rectum. The colostomy itself should

not interfere with normal sexual activity or pregnancy. It should not prevent one from dating and continuing relationships and friendships.

Clothing: Depending on stoma location usually you are able to wear similar clothing as before surgery including swimwear.

Sports and activities: With a securely attached pouch one can swim and participate in practically all types of sports. Caution is advised in heavy body contact sports and a guard or belt can be worn for protection. Travel is not restricted in any way. Bathing and showering may be done with or without the pouch in place.

Diet: For guidance, follow your nurse or doctor's orders at each stage of your post-op adjustment. Individual sensitivity to certain foods varies greatly but many people eat as they did before surgery. You must determine, by trial, what is best for you. A good practice for all is chew thoroughly and hydrate properly.

Hernias: A parastomal hernia is a protrusion of the intestines through the weakened area around the stoma. This will present as a bulge or lump around the ostomy site. Please contact your surgeon if you are experiencing significant pain from your ostomy site or if your ostomy is no longer working properly. Hernias are very common and don't always require repair.

Ostomy Canada Society: non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to all people with an ostomy, and their families, helping them to live life to the fullest through support, education, collaboration and advocacy. <https://www.ostomycanada.ca/>

Canadian Cancer Society: Has information and resources about living with a colostomy. www.cancer.ca