

Family Education Sheet

Home Care Instructions for Changing an Ostomy Pouch (Bag or Appliance)



Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well™

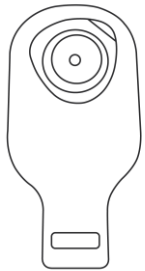
Clinical Education & Informatics
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An ostomy is a surgically created opening in the intestine (bowel). This is also called a stoma. To learn more, please read the Family Education Sheet "[Ostomies: A Patient Guide and Colostomies.](#)"

Your child will go home wearing an ostomy pouch. The pouch collects stool (poop). Your nurse will teach you how to change your child's pouch and how to care for the stoma. Your nurse will also tell you what supplies you'll need.

Important Tip: When you're home, it helps to set out all of your supplies within easy reach before removing the old pouch.

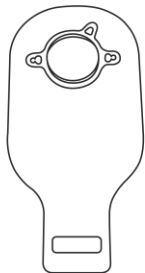
Supplies that you will need



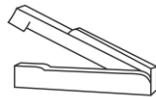
One Piece System:
Pouch and wafer are made in one piece.

or

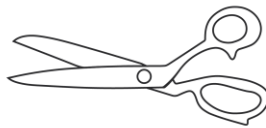
Wafer Pouch



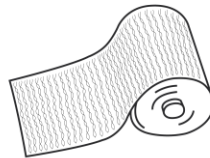
Two Piece System:
Pouch and wafer are separate. Each one has a plastic ring that "clicks" together, like closing a Tupperware container.



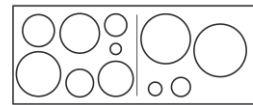
Pouch clip, unless pouch has built-in closure (not needed for urostomy pouch).



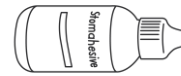
Scissors



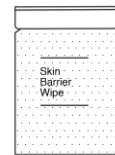
Gauze or soft paper towel



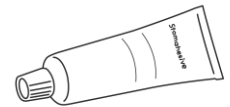
Measuring card & pen



Stomahesive powder forms a protective layer to dry out and protect sensitive skin

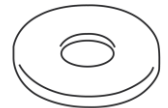


Skin barrier wipes form a protective film on skin



Stomahesive paste: Helps to fill in uneven skin creases or gaps to prevent leaks and skin irritation

or



Pectin Ring: A soft, moldable skin protector that can stretch and fit snugly around the base of your stoma to help prevent leaks

Steps for changing an ostomy pouch

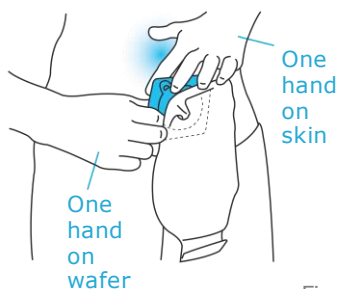


Figure 1

- 1 **Empty the pouch** before removing it.
- 2 With one hand on the skin and the other hand on the wafer, **gently lift the wafer off of the skin** (see Figure 1). It may be helpful to use an adhesive remover pad to lift the wafer off of the skin. The **adhesive must be washed off** with soap and water, then the skin should be rinsed and pat dry. If you do not do this, the next wafer may not stick to your skin well.
- 3 **Place the old pouch into a plastic bag** to throw it away. Sealable sandwich bags work well.



Figure 2

- 4 **Wash and clean the skin around the stoma** with warm water using a washcloth or soft paper towel. It's normal to have a small amount of bleeding from the stoma when washing the skin.

Steps for changing an ostomy pouch (continued)

- 5 **Look at the stoma.** The stoma should be moist. It should be pink or red.



Figure 3

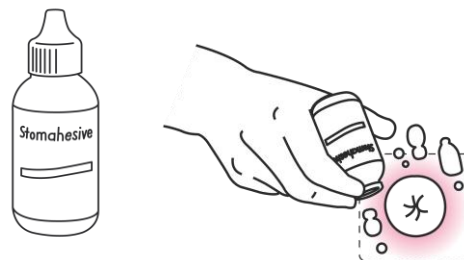


Figure 4

- 6 **Look at the skin around the stoma.**

- **If there is no irritation,** wipe the skin around the stoma where the wafer will touch the skin with the protective barrier wipe (see figure 3). This leaves a protective layer on the skin. Skip to step 8.

- **If skin is raw, wet or open, sprinkle Stomahesive powder on the wet, open skin.** This will help the skin heal. Then lightly pat the barrier wipe over the powder to form a protective film to seal it. Also, wipe the skin around the stoma where the wafer will touch the skin. Let the area dry for one to two minutes.

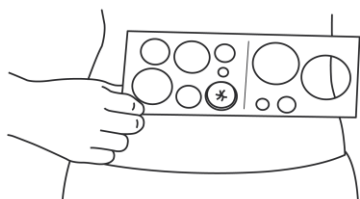


Figure 5



Figure 6

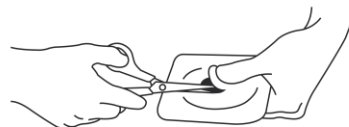


Figure 7

- 7 **Measure the stoma** with the measuring card (see Figure 5). Find the circle size on the card that fits closest to the stoma without touching it. The stoma may change size or shape during the first three to four weeks after surgery as the swelling goes down.

- 8 **Trace the chosen circle size onto the back of the paper on the wafer** (see Figure 6). Some pouches have pre-marked circles to guide you. Cut the wafer to the circle size (see Figure 7). The starter hole may not need to be in the middle. You may need to cut it off-center to keep the wafer from going into the belly button or groin area.

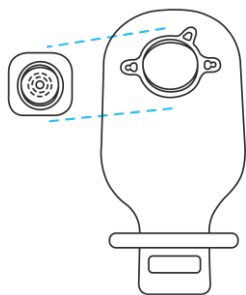


Figure 8

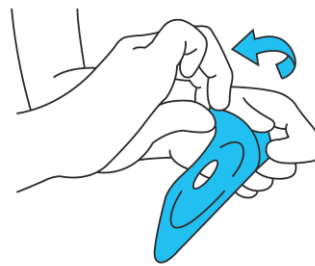


Figure 9

- 9 **If you have a two piece system,** attach the pouch to the plastic ring on the wafer (see Figure 8).

- 10 **Peel the paper off** of the back of the wafer (see Figure 9).

Steps for changing an ostomy pouch (continued)



Figure 10

11 Put Stomahesive paste around the opening of the sticky side of the wafer (see Figure 10).

- **Squeeze Stomahesive paste around the hole on the wafer.** It should be the same thickness as toothpaste.
- **If the skin around the stoma becomes red or open,** you may need to stop using Stomahesive paste and use a Pectin Ring. Mold the Pectin Ring on the skin around the stoma.

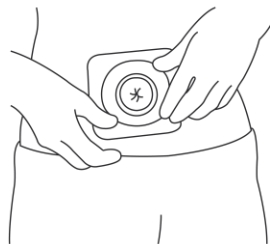


Figure 11



Figure 12

- 12 Center the pouch around the stoma and place it onto the skin** (see Figure 11). Firmly press the wafer to the skin near the stoma and hold for 3 to 4 minutes so the wafer sticks to the skin. You can place a warm facedoth over the stoma to help the wafer stick to the skin.
- 13 If your child has watery stool or leaking from the stoma,** place cotton balls or absorbent gel packets into the pouch after emptying out stool.
- 14 Put on the pouch and place a pouch clip on the end of it** (see Figure 12). Note: Some pouches have built-in, Velcro-like closures at the bottom.
- 15 Wash hands when done.**

When should I empty the pouch?

Empty the pouch when it is 1/3 full, at least 3 to 5 times a day. If the pouch gets too full, it gets heavy and may leak.

When should I change the ostomy pouch?

- If there is a leak under the wafer
- Every 2 to 4 days as instructed by your nurse

What supplies do I need at home?

There are a number of medical supply companies that will deliver ostomy supplies to your home.

- A nurse from Boston Children's Hospital will contact one of these supply companies to order what you need. The company you use usually depends on your health insurance plan.
- After the first delivery, you can contact the company directly for additional orders. Be sure to plan ahead so you do not run out of supplies, as it usually takes one week to receive new supplies.
- A nurse from Boston Children's will arrange for a visiting nurse to come to your home. The visiting nurse will continue ostomy care teaching and answer any questions you may have.

Important tips

- A follow-up visit with your child's doctor is very important. The nurse will help to schedule this before going home.
- Always carry an extra pouch with you when you are away from home in case it leaks or needs to be removed during a medical procedure.

This Family Education Sheet is available in Arabic and Spanish.

When should I call the doctor or nurse?

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns, or if your child:

- Has a fever higher than 101°F or "feels very hot"
- Is vomiting (throwing up)
- Is sleepier than usual
- Is cranky and irritable
- Has a bloated, swollen belly
- Has very little or no poop coming out of the stoma for more than 4 hours
- Has a large increase in the amount of poop coming out of the stoma
- Has diarrhea that is foul-smelling or bloody
- Is unable to eat or drink
- Has a blue, purple or black stoma
- Has a rash or redness of the skin around the stoma for more than 2 to 3 days

If there is bleeding from the stoma, firmly hold a cool, wet cloth on the area. If it does not stop in 5 minutes, call your child's doctor.

Contact us

Monday–Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.: Call the Surgical Nurse Practitioner's line at 617-355-7716

After 5 p.m. on weekdays and on weekends and holidays: Call the hospital page operator at 617-355-6369. Ask to speak with the surgeon on-call.