

The

Mailbag

The Ostomy Support Newsletter Of Jacksonville, Florida

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Mark Your Calendar For Our Next Chapter Meeting October 19, 2008

WORLD OSOMY DAY OCTOBER 3, 2009

**For more information please visit the
International Ostomy Association Webiste:
<http://www.ostomyinternational.org>**

Traveling The World As an Ostomy

I am sorry it has taken me so long to bring closure to my African safari but I did want to share with you some thoughts on travel before I end this adventure. As you all know I am a senior citizen, an ileostomate since 1980, and I firmly believe that having a stoma does not stop you living a full and productive life.

I have traveled extensively, and dealt with many different toilet arrangements and I certainly had a couple of unusual experiences while on safari. I think one needs to understand the toilet facilities before one leaves home and be prepared to be deal with the unusual. For example if you are going on safari, you have to be prepared to empty your pouch if necessary behind a bush or a tree. There are no flush toilets out in the middle of the vast lands that are home to zebra, elephants, giraffes, water buffalo etc.

You also have to be prepared to answer questions about your ostomy when going through security at airports and I would like to share with you what has happened to me on more than one occasion. I have had hip replacement surgery so that when I go through security I always ring the bell, which then means I have to be "wanded or patted down." I haven't found any real consistency with which method is chosen. When I have left Toronto, I have been both wanded and patted down. I have never had a problem when wanded but I almost always have questions asked if I am patted down. **(Continued on page 4)**

Ostomy Tips for the Pool Getting Into the Swim of Things

via Orange County (NY) Area Newsletter

Can I go swimming with an ostomy? The answer is a resounding “YES!!!” Swimming is an excellent exercise—an opportunity for a good cardiovascular workout without overly stressing your joints (like knees and hips) or your spine. The pool is a great place to work on those range-of-motion exercises, too. The water helps support you while you move. And water exercises can be done in the deep end or while sitting in the shallow end of the pool. Best of all, swimming is an activity you can enjoy with family and friends of all ages and abilities!

So why are so many of us afraid to get back into the water? Here are some of our issues and solutions: I’m afraid that my appliance will leak or come off while I’m in the pool. This is by far everyone’s number one concern. The thing to remember is that your pouching system is designed to be leak-free and water-proof, and your wafer adhesive actually gets *stronger* in water. As long as your seal is strong and intact, strap on your swim fins and jump in. TIP #1: Don’t go swimming right after you’ve put on a new wafer. TIP #2: Make sure your pouch is empty. TIP #3: Picture framing your wafer with water-proof tape isn’t necessary but may give you the extra confidence you need. TIP #4: Avoid wearing pouches with filters into the pool. Water may get in through the filter.

I’m concerned that people will be able to see my pouching system under my bathing suit. A *dark colored suit with a busy pattern* will camouflage your appliance better than light colors like white or yellow, which can become almost transparent when wet. Note: your pouch will dry just as quickly as your suit will, so no need to worry about a tell-tale damp spot. TIP #1: For women, choose a suit with a small, well-placed ruffle or skirt. TIP #2: For men, choose a suit with a higher cut waist or longer leg. TIP #3: You may wish to wear a smaller, non-drainable pouch (those designed for intimate moments work well here, too!). TIP #4: If you have a colostomy and you irrigate, you may try wearing a stoma cap while you swim.

I’m embarrassed about changing into/out of my bathing suit in the locker room and people noticing my ostomy appliance. Some of us don’t care who sees what, while others are more modest when it comes to who knows about our ostomies and pouching systems. If you’re a little on the shy side, try to find a spot that’s out of the way or less crowded. Don’t let the possibility of problems arising when changing prevent you from an enjoyable afternoon swim with family or friends. TIP #1: You may wish to change and towel off in a convenient bathroom stall. TIP #2: Put on a dry, oversized T-shirt as a cover-up while you change. TIP #3: A dry suit is easier to take off than a wet one. Relax by the side of the pool with a good book or a talkative friend before heading for the locker room. TIP #4: Wear your bathing suit under a jogging suit or sweat pants and don’t worry about changing at all.

What about using the hot tub or Jacuzzi? Go ahead. Again, as long as your appliance seal is good and your pouch is empty you should have no problems with your ostomy.

General Tips:

Do some planning – you know your body better than anyone and how long after eating your ostomy starts to work. Try to arrange your swimming for a time when your output will be minimal. If you are still concerned about entering the pool with your appliance, try this: put on your bathing suit, fill your bathtub with water and sit in it for half an hour. You’ll feel more confident when you see there’s no leakage. You’ll also get to see what your suit (and your covered pouching system) look like wet.

A support garment or bike shorts under your suit or a snug, Lycra bathing suit can help to keep your pouching system in place and prevent your pouch and clip from migrating to the groin area. Some ostomates sew pockets into the inside of their suits as a way of providing additional pouch support, if needed. If you wear an ostomy belt, you should know that cloth belts stretch in the water – wear a rubber one if you want to wear a belt in the pool. Again, remember to get your doctor’s okay before you take to the water or begin any exercise.

A Little Ostomy Test

via Hemet-San Jacinto (CA) *Stoma-Life*

1. Your appliance has been on for 2 days and you experience a burning, uncomfortable sensation around your stoma. You:

- a. Ignore it. It seems to come and go anyway.
- b. Wait until the designated day to change your appliance.
- c. Take a cool bath.
- d. Change your appliance immediately.

The answer is **d**. Ideally, your appliance may stay on for five to seven days. However, if you experience burning or itchiness around the stoma, discomfort or pain around the stoma or discoloration of the adhesive, change your appliance regardless of the day. These signs usually indicate leakage. Stool or urine on the skin is very irritating. In addition, itching or irritation under the pouch can be due to dehydration. If you are pretty sure the appliance is not leaking and there is nothing externally wrong with it, try drinking a few glasses of water instead of removing the appliance. Don't be a hero. When it bothers you, change.

2. When you remove your appliance, you notice the skin around the stoma is reddened. To treat it, you:

- a. Apply cool compresses for a short period of time before reapplying your appliance.
- b. Apply a protective powder such as Stomahesive or Karaya to reddened skin areas, remove any excess, and continue with reapplying your appliance.
- c. Apply a soothing cream or ointment to the reddened skin areas.
- d. Use an alcohol wipe on your peristomal skin.
- e.

The answer is **b**. It is important to observe the skin around the stoma. Use a mirror to help observe the skin and stoma. If the skin appears reddened, irritated or weepy, you may require a protective powder. You may need to change your appliance every two or three days until the skin heals. While creams and ointments may be a reasonable solution for skin irritation in other areas of your body, they may not be useful around your stoma because your appliance will not adhere to moist or oily skin. Cool compresses may be soothing but cannot heal the skin. Alcohol will dry the skin which may cause it to itch. As an added note, hair growth around the stoma can be quite painful when removing the appliance. Remove excess hair with an electric razor or scissors. A straight edged or safety razor should not be used because of the risk of irritation to the skin and cutting the stoma. Ostomy adhesive removers may help reduce hair pulling when removing the pouch.

3. Your neighbors invite you to a pool party. You:

- a. Decline the invitation since you cannot swim with an ostomy.
- b. Limit your fluid and food intake for 12 hours prior to the party so your stoma is not active.
- c. Accept the invitation.
- d. Go in the pool and then worry that your prosthesis will probably leak.

The answer is **c**. If you enjoyed swimming before the operation, continue to swim after. For extra security while swimming, you may want to picture-frame the adhesive part of your appliance with paper or waterproof tape or apply a skin sealant, for example - Sween prep, directly over the adhesive. Printed rather than solid colored bathing suits help to camouflage the outline of the appliance. Some women prefer bathing suits with skirts and some men prefer boxer-style trunks, but snug fitting suits may be worn. A lightweight party girdle may be worn to hold the appliance firmly in place. If you have an ileostomy, limiting food and drink will not stop your ostomy from functioning. When the stomach is empty, the discharge is liquid, highly acidic and gassy. Skipping meals or limiting fluid intake leads to dehydration and/or electrolyte imbalance.

This happened to me on my return journey home from Africa and it was at Frankfurt airport.

The security was very tight, I rang the bell, and was referred to a private section where a female security guard thoroughly “patted me down.” She felt my pouch through my pants and asked what I had underneath my trousers. This is not the first time that this has happened to me so I know what to say. I said that I had surgery which resulted in my having to wear a pouch on my stomach to collect waste. She asked me to undo my pants so that she could see. She looked at the pouch, told me to do my pants back up and then said she would wand over the pouch. I asked her why she was wandering over the pouch and her reply was, “ If I was smuggling anything through in my pouch like drugs or precious stones, the wandering would reveal this.” When she was finished, she thanked me for my patience and off I went.

I am no longer surprised that this routine happens and I know the best thing to do is stay calm, explain what you have and be prepared to ask for a nurse or doctor if asked to remove any clothing. This happened to me in Washington DC when I was asked to remove my pants. I told the security person that I was dealing with, I would be glad to comply but I needed a nurse or doctor present so that I could be assured that they would understand what I had and why I was wearing an appliance. In fact along came a policewoman who asked me a few questions; I opened my pants, she saw my pouch, explained to the security person what it was. I then showed them a spare face plate and pouch that I had in my carry on. I believe I have written this up before because this happened just before our World Congress in Puerto Rico. I asked the police officer if she had time for a coffee and asked her for her advice for those of us who travel with ostomy equipment on our abdomen. Her reply was to stay calm and just tell the truth. Be prepared to do what I did when I was asked to remove clothing – take it to the next level and request medical personnel. As the police officer said, normally a police offer will come and the matter will go no further unless they truly suspect that you are smuggling.

You can carry all the paper work and ostomy cards you like; it will make no difference. These can be forged, copied and will not prevent you from being searched.

This is a small inconvenience compared to the joys of seeing different lifestyles when you reach your destination. Save your pennies as cost of traveling is getting higher but go and enjoy. Remember that having a stoma does not stop you leading a full productive life unless you have additional health related problems. Safe traveling to you all. I am off to Bolivia at the end of August so I will write from there but I will have something to say before then I am sure.

I wish you all the very best.

Di Bracken, Past President, International Ostomy Association (Email: ippioa@ostomyinternational.org)

Editors Note: You may read more about Di’s travels and other Ostomy related new via the IOA Blog:

<http://www.cblog.ostomyinternational.org/>

Ostomy Chat Room Weekly Meetings

Yahoo Peoples with Ostomy2* - Mondays, 8:00 pm US Central time
<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/peopleswithostomy2>

Community Zero (Ostomy) Support* - Wednesdays, 9:00 pm US Eastern time
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ostomatessupport/>

Shaz & Jason's Chat* - Saturdays, 8:00 pm UK time / 3:00pm US Eastern Time
<http://www.ostomy.fsnet.co.uk/chat.html>

Yahoo UK Ostomy Support* - 1st & 3rd Sundays, 8:00 pm UK time / 3:00 pm US Eastern Time
<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/ukostomysupport>

Use this form to join our chapter! You do not have to be an ostomate to be a member and/or support the work of UOA. All information on this form will be kept confidential.

Name _____

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Type of intestinal or urinary diversion: Colostomy __, Ileostomy __, Urostomy __, Ileoanal Pull-thru __
Continent Ileostomy __, Continent Urostomy __, None __, Other __

You may use my name in chapter Newsletter & Directory: Yes __ No __

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