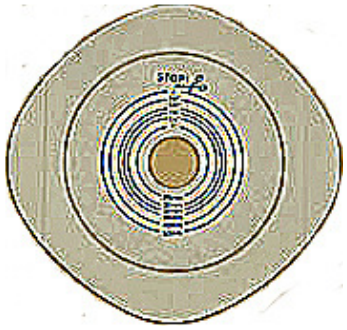
Choosing a baseplate

The baseplate adheres to your abdomen, with your stoma sticking out a hole in the middle. When selecting the best baseplate for you, these are the 4 main choices:

1. **Pre-cut, cut-to-fit, or moldable?** (referring to the hole in the middle, which has to be the same size and shape as your stoma)

Pre-cut – These come with a range of standard hole sizes. If you have a nice circular stoma opening, in a common size (diameter), this is a good choice. If the size or shape of your stoma is only slightly different than one of the standard pre-cut holes, you can apply a moldable barrier ring (described later in the *Accessories* section) around the baseplate hole to make up the difference – a sort of retro-fitting. But this means additional time and expense.

Cut-to-fit – Designed for those with irregularly sized or shaped openings. There's a small starter hole in the middle, but you have to cut your own hole to fit your stoma. Specialized ostomy scissors will make this easier. The baseplates are marked with circular "cut here" guidelines for standard sizes. You'll need to know your exact stoma shape and dimension. If you're in between two sizes, you just cut between those lines. If your opening isn't circular but more irregularly shaped, you or your stoma nurse will have to create a template (on a piece of plastic or cardboard) with a hole that exactly matches your opening, then use a felt pen or marker to trace that shape onto the baseplate, showing where to cut. This isn't the best choice for someone with manual dexterity problems.



Moldable – These baseplates have a larger hole, filled with a moldable material around a center opening. There's no cutting or measuring involved here. You stretch or roll up the moldable material until it's roughly the size and shape of your stoma (just a little bigger, actually). After you adhere the baseplate to your abdomen, with your stoma poking through this enlarged opening, you then push the material back to fit snugly around it ("turtlenecking"). This works with stomas of any size or shape. It's a particular advantage to anyone whose stoma dimensions aren't consistent, but sometimes change. One drawback is that the moldable material often swells a little. This can help seal out leaks, but if your stoma is flush or retracted (at or below your skin level), the swelling can cover it too much. Also, moldable baseplates tend to be more expensive than pre-cut or cut-to-fit ones.

All of these types of baseplates are available for 1-piece and 2-piece systems.

DECISION MATRIX

	Pre-cut	***Cut to fit***	***Moldable***
Stoma = common size, circular	**Yes ✓**	Unnecessary	Unnecessary
Stoma = irregular size or shape	More complicated	**Yes ✓**	**Yes ✓**
Stoma changes, inconsistent	No	**Ok ✓**	**Best ✓**
Stoma retracted or flush	**Yes ✓**	**Yes ✓**	No
Manual dexterity problems	**Yes ✓**	No	**Yes ✓**
Cost	**Less ✓**	**Less ✓**	More

2. Flat, convex, or concave?

Flat –These baseplates are flexible, and mold well to your abdomen. They tend to be less expensive than convex or concave baseplates. By default, this is the best choice for most ostomates – particularly if their stomas protrude slightly (which is normal) and they don't have a protruding bulge from a hernia.

Convex – This baseplate has a circular, curved, rigid center that sinks down, with a hole in the middle. You press the baseplate down so the stoma protrudes through the hole, then secure it to your abdomen by pressing around the flexible, adhesive edges. It's like a saucer with a hole in the middle and sticky tape under the rim. This is the best choice for an ostomate whose stoma is flush with the skin surface, or retracts below it, which increases the risk of leaking underneath the baseplate or pancaking (output accumulating around the stoma). With the stoma now protruding through the baseplate, the output can drop down more easily into the pouch. You can choose between light, moderate, and deep convexity (referring to how lightly or deeply it presses into your abdomen). Always use the minimum convexity you can, to avoid the risk of pressure sores or ulcers. One drawback of convex baseplates is that since they're more rigid than flat ones, they can be easier to loosen and allow leaks.

Concave – These baseplates are designed to adhere well to bulges or protrusions (like hernias) on the abdomen. At this time, they are not available from all manufacturers, but at least one company makes them. The baseplate is flexible and shaped like a flower with five petals that curve downwards, over your bulge. Imagine trying to gift wrap a cantaloupe. It can't be done without creating puckers and creases. That's what it can be like when you try to stick a flat baseplate over a round, protruding hernia bulge. But with a concave baseplate, you place the more sturdy center (with the hole) around the stoma and then press the more flexible "petals" down around the hernia bulge on all sides. There are a

few possible drawbacks, however. They tend to cost a little more than flat baseplates, and there's no convex center to press down around a flush or retracted stoma.

DECISION MATRIX

	Flat	***Convex***	***Concave***
Flexibility (more secure)	**More flexible ✓**	More rigid	**More flexible ✓**
Cost	**Less ✓**	More	More
Protruding stoma	**Yes ✓**	No	**Yes ✓**
Retracted or flush stoma	No	**Yes ✓**	No
Bulging hernia	Maybe	Maybe	**Yes ✓**

3. With or without belt tabs?

You can order elastic ostomy belts that go around your body and hook onto tabs on both sides of the baseplate or pouch, keeping it snug against your abdomen. (Note: we're not talking about hernia belts here. That's a whole different thing).

This is particularly good for people wearing convex baseplates, because it helps hold them down tightly around the stoma. Ostomates with flat baseplates typically don't need a belt, but might choose to wear one if they're having trouble with their baseplates adhering well, or just want that extra feeling of security. If you're going to wear a belt, be sure to get pouches or baseplates with tabs. Some companies put the tabs on the baseplates, others on the pouches.

Baseplate with belt tabs

The two tabs on the left and right are belt tabs. The tab on the top is just to grab onto, when pulling the pouch off.

Ostomy belt

4. Regular or extended wear?

The most obvious difference between these is that extended wear baseplates can be worn longer than regular wear ones. But there are other factors to consider.

Regular wear – The main advantage is that they're less "tacky" and adhesive. They still provide a good seal, but they're gentler on the skin when removing them, particularly if you change baseplates frequently. Because they're less resistant to liquid stool, they're best for colostomates who have firmer, more fully formed stool.

Extended wear – These baseplates are a better choice for people with ileostomies, or more liquid stool. They're less likely to allow the liquid to seep under the baseplate and irritate the skin. They tend to cost more than regular wear baseplates, but because they're generally worn longer, it can all even out.

DECISION MATRIX

	Regular	***Extended wear***
Gentle on skin when removing	**More gentle ✓**	Less gentle
Firmer stool	**Yes ✓**	No
Loose/watery stool	No	**Yes ✓**
Wear time	Shorter	**Longer ✓**

Choosing a pouch

The pouch attaches to the baseplate. You have 6 basic choices here.

1. Drainable or closed/non-drainable?

Drainable pouches have an opening at the bottom so you can empty the contents into the toilet, then close it up again and go on your way.

They're good for more liquid stool, which is easier to drain out of the bottom opening and makes it easier to clean the opening afterwards. After emptying, you typically roll up the bottom then close it with either a plastic clip or a VELCRO®-type hook-and-loop fastener. Drainable pouches are more convenient when you're out and about, as you can empty them in a public toilet, close them up again, and you're done. You don't have to worry about disposing of a used pouch. Drainable pouches can be more cost effective too. Even though they tend to cost more per unit, you can empty and re-use them frequently so they don't have to be changed as often as closed pouches.