

Problem Solving

Common Problems

The most common problems you may experience when you are home are:

- ▶ Irritated and red skin
- ▶ Barrier not sticking
- ▶ Dehydration
- ▶ No output from the stoma
- ▶ Medical emergencies
- ▶ Stoma issues (bleeding, prolapse, retraction)
- ▶ Infection (urinary tract or other source)
- ▶ Long-term problems

Let's talk about each one of these so that you can know what to watch for, what you can do, and when to reach out for help.

Irritated and Red Skin

The skin around the stoma can become irritated and red. This is the most common problem for new ostomy patients. It is most often due to urine on the skin or from tape and barriers pulling off the top layer of skin.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ▶ Check your skin with each pouch change. Use a mirror if needed to see all of the skin around your stoma.
- ▶ Measure the stoma and cut the barrier to fit the stoma.
- ▶ Do not wear the skin barrier too long. Suggested wear time is 3 to 5 days. Wear time can depend on how often you empty your pouch, how much you sweat, your level of activity, and your body shape.
- ▶ If the skin is irritated or weepy (wet), apply skin barrier powder. Lightly apply the powder and brush off the excess. You may have to use skin sealant/skin prep after the powder. Then apply the pouching system.
- ▶ If there is seepage of urine under a specific area of your skin or by a skin fold, you may need skin barrier paste or a moldable ring to fill in any gaps.
- ▶ Measure your stoma during each pouch change for the first 3 months after your operation. Your stoma will change in shape and size as your body heals. It is best not to buy pre-cut barriers until at least 3 months after your ostomy operation.
- ▶ Don't delay in asking for help. One visit with a WOC nurse could save you from going through extensive trial and error.

RECOGNIZING COMMON SKIN PROBLEMS

SAMPLE

It can be hard to recognize why you are having skin problems. Here are some common problems and what you can do first. If there is no improvement in a few days—get help. Call your WOC nurse or other provider for assistance.⁴

Skin redness directly above the stoma site

This might happen because the barrier is not cut to the correct size. If your skin is weepy, apply stoma powder, resize the barrier, and apply to your stoma. The site should look better with the next pouch change in 3 to 5 days.



Irritated and red skin around the entire stoma site

This may happen because your skin is sensitive or you are stripping the top layer of skin away when you remove the barrier. You may need to be more gentle when removing the barrier. You can also use an adhesive remover or try a different barrier.



Fungal skin infection

This occurs most often in damp sites, such as in skin folds or under an ostomy barrier. The rash starts as red raised bumps and then becomes more red, sometimes with a white coating. Itching and burning are common. Check the barrier and keep your skin dry. Contact your WOC nurse or doctor for an antifungal powder.



Hair follicle infection

You will see redness around the hair entry. This can be caused by moisture—so the first step is to make sure you have a dry area under the pouch. Be sure to keep the hair around your stoma trimmed. It is best to trim using scissors or a dry electric shaver. It is not recommended to wet shave the skin.

