

What do I do if my ostomy makes noises in public?

SITUATION 1: LOW DISCLOSURE

You are on an elevator with a few people that you do not know. All of a sudden, your ostomy bag makes a loud noise. You do not want to tell anyone about your ostomy, but do not know what to do.

Suggestion:

It is OK to not say anything.

OR

You may feel comfortable pretending like the sound is something like your stomach growling instead of your ostomy making a noise. Try saying something like, “Sorry, I have not had lunch yet!”

Some people discussed coping with the potential awkwardness of ostomy noises in public spaces. “Sometimes, ostomy bags can be a bit noisy. I think that sometimes that’s a hard thing for people to know how to deal with because you don’t know when that’s gonna happen. And so, **sometimes it just means ignoring it, because who’s gonna know whether it was you. Or sometimes...you can kind of crack a joke and make light of it** if the people around you know your situation, and it can be lighthearted.”

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SITUATION 2: MEDIUM DISCLOSURE

Imagine you are in a meeting at work. During the meeting, your ostomy bag keeps making noises. People keep looking at you, so you feel like you should say something.

Suggestion:

“Excuse me, I have an ostomy bag and sometimes it makes noises.”

There may be times when you feel the need to explain the noises your ostomy bag makes. In these cases, some people respond with, "Excuse me, I'm having stomach problems." Some people also told the person they are with that they had intestinal surgery.

People recalled that they felt awkward when their ostomy bag made noises in public at the beginning of their ostomy journey. It helped people to remember that no one in public knows that those noises came from their bag. “You don’t have to say anything. How many times has someone ripped one, and everyone just looks around.” It can be embarrassing when you know the noise came from your ostomy bag. People with ostomies have an important reminder, **“You have no control over it.”**