

Kindly written by Kate Howlett, Salts Community Stoma Care Nurse

## STOMA SOLUTIONS

Salts Healthcare supplies a comprehensive range of ostomy accessories designed to provide solutions to the day-to-day problems of leaks, sore skin, adhesion, odour, residue and skin protection. For more details, contact us on the FREEPHONE number below:

**FREEPHONE 0800 626388** (UK) or **FREEPHONE 1-800 408508** (Ireland)  
or log on to our website at **www.salts.co.uk**

### Salts Healthcare Ltd.

Richard Street  
Aston  
Birmingham  
B7 4AA  
England

Tel: +44 (0) 121 333 2000  
Fax: +44 (0) 121 333 2010  
E-mail: salt@salts.co.uk

### Salts Healthcare Ireland Ltd.

Unit 6, Block C  
Centrepark Business Park  
Oak Drive  
Clondalkin  
Dublin 12

Tel: (01) 460 0729  
Fax: (01) 460 1726  
E-mail: salt@salts.co.uk

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STOMA CARE



Keeping on the move

**SALTS**  
HEALTHCARE

Excellence in stoma care

# Exercise and lifestyle tips following stoma surgery

After stoma surgery, it is important that you get back to a healthy lifestyle as soon as you feel able. The normal convalescence period is 3 months. Whatever activities you enjoyed prior to your operation, you should be able to return to after your recovery. This will, however, depend on your general condition and the type of, and reason for, surgery.

## EARLY DAYS

Initially when you return home you will feel very tired. It is important to listen to your body and have plenty of rest. Perhaps have an afternoon nap or just sit down for a while. Do a little and then rest a little.

## Types of exercise/activity

### LIFTING

- Heavy lifting should be avoided for 12 weeks following your operation
- Gradually increase activity: many household jobs such as ironing or washing up can be done whilst sitting down
- Avoid stretching to reach high cupboards
- Slide furniture rather than lifting it
- Don't carry heavy loads of shopping – divide it into two bags, rather than one, to balance it



- Don't lift anything heavier than a full kettle of water for a few weeks
- Don't vacuum for 12 weeks
- If you need to lift, make sure you bend your knees and keep the object close to your body
- If you are carrying out lifting activities regularly, consider wearing a support garment or belt.

### ABDOMINAL EXERCISE

As a result of your operation, your abdominal muscles may have weakened, which can result in hernia formation.

It is important to continue with the exercises taught to you in hospital by the physiotherapist.

Exercises that can be beneficial, regardless of age and general fitness, are Yoga, Tai-Chi and Pilates; these are gentle, low-impact forms of exercise.



Remember – always check with your surgeon or GP that they are happy for you to exercise. **Stop if it hurts!**

### WALKING

Walking is an excellent form of exercise. As you begin to feel better start taking short walks. Don't be tempted to walk too far – remember that you have to get home again. As you feel stronger, you should try and walk for 30 minutes each day. This will also help to strengthen your abdominal muscles.



## DRIVING

Check with your Stoma Care Nurse/GP/Surgeon when to resume driving. You should be able to carry out an emergency stop without putting strain on your abdominal muscles. This can take up to 6 weeks following your surgery. Also check your insurance policy as their information may vary.

Following stoma surgery, it is compulsory to wear a seatbelt. One exemption allowed by law is if you have a valid exemption certificate from a medical practitioner stating that it is inadvisable to wear a seatbelt. However, a correctly fitted seatbelt will not harm your stoma and will cause you less damage if an accident occurs.

If you find that your seatbelt is uncomfortable, you can buy a device that you can wear over your stoma that allows the belt to be worn loosely over your stoma. These are available from any good car accessory shop.



## GARDENING

For the first 3 months following surgery, avoid any heavy work such as digging or pushing a lawnmower. Kneel down when weeding – you may want to use a “kneeler” with support handles to prevent strain on your abdominal muscles

when standing back up. Again, it may be advisable to wear a support belt or pants when carrying out heavy work.



## SWIMMING

Swimming is an excellent exercise for improving overall fitness. Any exercise in water will be beneficial, particularly aqua-aerobics, once you have completely recovered from your surgery.

Swimwear may be a concern. For men, high-waisted shorts are ideal and, for ladies, patterned swimsuits or suits with a sash or bow over the stoma will be more discreet. Several companies now specialise in stoma wear, but suitable swimwear can also be found on the high street.

Colostomists may be able to wear a stoma cap instead of their usual pouch.



## ACTIVE SPORTS

You may wish to resume more active sports. It may be advisable to discuss this with your Stoma Care Nurse who can advise you on how to avoid any problems. It may be necessary to wear a stoma protector, support pants or a belt when partaking in more strenuous or contact sports. Again, high-waisted shorts are available from all good sports shops.

It is important when undertaking exercise to drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.



## RETURNING TO WORK

This will depend on what type of work you do. It is probably advisable to wait until after your post-operative check-up and consider a gradual return. If your work involves heavy



