

Patient Advice Leaflet for Managing a Prolapsed Stoma

What is a prolapsed stoma and how will I know if my stoma is prolapsed

A prolapsed stoma occurs when the stoma becomes longer than normal. If your stoma has prolapsed it will look longer than normal and stick out further from the body.

When does the stoma prolapse

A stoma can prolapse if the muscles supporting it are weak or it may happen as a result of straining the abdominal muscles i.e. through lifting. It is important to be aware that if your stoma has prolapsed once, then in effect a weakness has been created and it is then quite common for it to prolapse again whenever you increase your abdominal pressure. You increase your abdominal pressure whenever you sit up, cough, sneeze or strain your abdominal muscles by lifting. It is therefore very common for the stoma to “pop out” when you are up and about during the day.

However, whenever you reduce your abdominal pressure i.e. by lying down, the stoma will often slide back in and become normal size again.

Should I be worried if my stoma has prolapsed

If you have a prolapsed stoma then your stoma nurse will explain to you how to look after it and what to look out for. Providing your stoma remains a healthy colour and continues to function normally then having a prolapsed stoma is not something to be concerned about. Ways of managing and reducing your prolapsed stoma are given below but as long as the stoma either, naturally reduces itself when you lie down or can be manually reduced then you do not need to worry about it popping in and out.

However, you should inform your GP or stoma nurse if the stoma turns purple, black, becomes ulcerated, painful or stops functioning normally.

A prolapsed stoma can often become swollen

If the stoma remains prolapsed for long periods of time then there is more risk that it will become swollen. This is because when the stoma hangs down, fluid pools at the tip of the stoma and causes it to become swollen. It may then be more difficult at the end of the day for the stoma to be reduced back to its normal size.

If it is convenient, it may be advisable to lie down in the afternoon to allow the stoma to go back in and reduce any potential swelling.

How to reduce a prolapsed stoma

The following techniques can be used to reduce a prolapsed stoma.

1. Lay flat so that your abdominal pressure is reduced. Lie with your head back, looking up at the ceiling. If you are trying to look at what you are doing you will be straining your abdominal muscles and hence increasing your abdominal pressure.

2. By feeling, rather than looking, place a finger on the prolapsed end of the stoma and lifting it up, apply gentle downward pressure. If the stoma is not swollen, then the bowel will usually slide back down into the stoma opening.
3. If the stoma is swollen, then the swelling can be reduced by using either a cold compress or sugar.
 - a. If using a cold compress, then wrap some ice in a towel and place over the stoma for no more than 5 minutes at any one time. Keep the stoma bag on whilst doing this
 - b. If using sugar, then apply liberal amounts of household sugar onto the stoma and leave it there for 20-30 minutes to reduce the amount of swelling. This can be quite a messy affair so it is best to put a new/ clean stoma bag on and place the sugar into your stoma bag. If you are using a closed bag you will need to put the sugar in first, before you put the bag on. If you are using a drainable bag the sugar can be added after the bag has been put on by tipping it in through the bottom end. Once the bag is on, move the sugar so that it sits around the stoma.

The sugar works by drawing out fluid from the swollen stoma so helping to reduce the size. Be aware that as the sugar draws fluid out of the stoma you will end up with a syrupy fluid in the bag.

Potential problems

Leaks

The lining of the bowel naturally produces mucous to help lubricate and keep itself healthy. When the stoma is prolapsed there is more bowel lining present outside the body which produces mucous and can make the stoma wetter than normal. This can affect how your bags stick around the stoma and may cause more problems with the bags leaking

Sore skin

A prolapsed stoma can make it difficult for you to know what the correct sized template is to use for your stoma bag. The stoma will be much larger when it is prolapsed than when it is normal size. This means the bag may need to be cut bigger to allow it to be fitted over the stoma and this may cause problems with sore skin.

It is important to get advice and support from your stoma nurse who will be able to assess how best to manage the stoma with you.

Contact Information

Stoma Nurses Norfolk and Norwich Hospital **01603 286441**

Hours of work **08.45am - 16.45pm Monday to Friday** (not including bank holidays)

If you are worried about your stoma and either cannot contact the stoma nurses or it is a weekend/ bank holiday then you should contact your GP
Alternatively the NHS 111 helpline can give advice.