

Stoma care: quick guide

Colostomy, ileostomy and urostomy basics for care staff

Always follow the person's care plan and their stoma nurse's advice. A healthy stoma is soft, slippery and pink. It should not hurt, but can bleed easily if scratched or wiped.

The three main types

Type	What it means	Output
Colostomy	Part of the large bowel (colon) is brought out through the stoma	Stool (poo)
Ileostomy	The small bowel (ileum) is brought out through the stoma	Stool (poo)
Urostomy	Urine is diverted out through the stoma	Urine

Everyday care

- ☐ Follow the care plan and the stoma nurse's advice for the person's appliance and routine.
- ☐ Wash hands before and after; use gloves and an apron in line with your infection control policy.
- ☐ Protect privacy and dignity, and support the person to do what they can themselves.
- ☐ Check the skin around the stoma and that the bag fits well each time.
- ☐ Dispose of used bags in line with your waste policy.
- ☐ Support regular meals, chewing well and enough fluids, unless the plan says otherwise.

Contact the stoma nurse, GP or healthcare team if you notice

- ☐ Red, sore or broken skin around the stoma.
- ☐ A change in the size, shape or colour of the stoma.
- ☐ The bag keeps leaking or no longer fits well.
- ☐ Less output than usual, cramps, feeling sick or swelling around the stoma.
- ☐ Signs of dehydration, such as tiredness, a dry mouth or a lot of output.
- ☐ For a urostomy: cloudy, bloodstained or strong-smelling urine, or a high temperature.

Get urgent medical help (NHS 111, or 999 in an emergency) if the person has

- ☐ A high temperature or chills, alongside other symptoms.
- ☐ A lot of blood coming from inside the stoma or in the bag.
- ☐ No output for a long time, with severe cramps, feeling or being sick.
- ☐ Signs of serious dehydration.

Sources (checked 16 September 2026): NHS: What is a colostomy? (reviewed 18 December 2024); NHS: Complications of a colostomy; NHS: Complications of an ileostomy; Cambridge University Hospitals: urostomy discharge information. A quick-reference resource only. Always follow the person's care plan, your organisation's policies and procedures, and current national guidance.