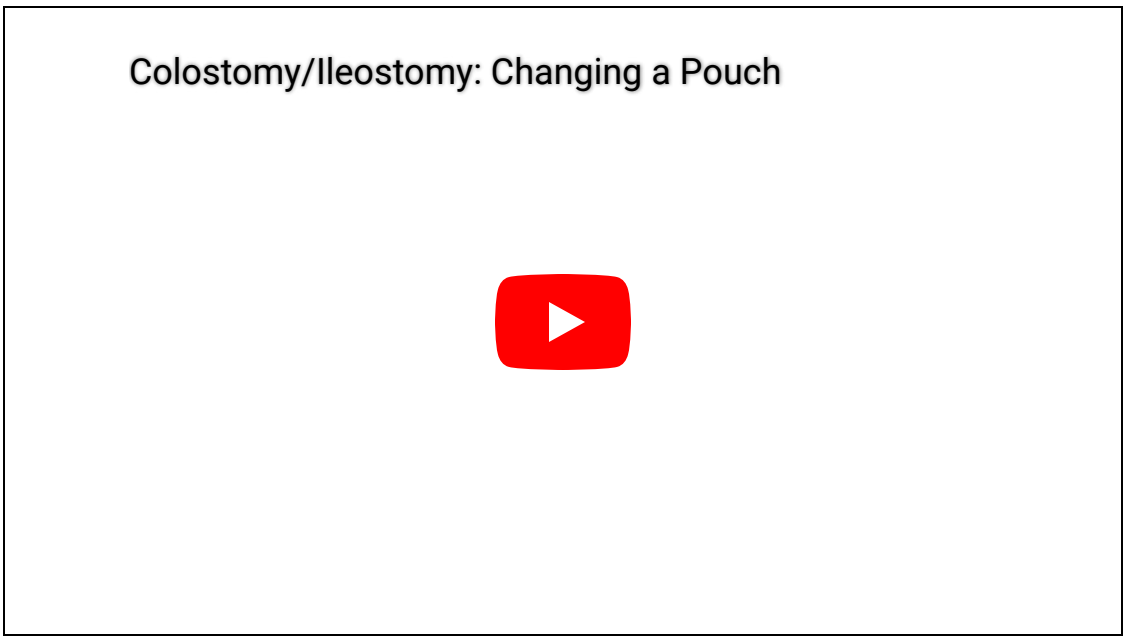
Change the Pouch (Ostomy Skills)



- Your entire one-piece pouch will need to be changed every 3 to 5 days. Moisture and sweat, a full and heavy pouch, and uneven skin around the stoma can decrease the length of time the system will stick to the skin. If you see any output or leakage, or if you feel any burning or itching under the barrier, change your pouch right away.
- For an ileostomy or colostomy, it is easier to change the pouch when the stoma is less active. Ideal times include first thing in the morning before eating or two hours after eating.
- For a urostomy, you will always be producing urine, so the pouch and barrier can be changed at any time.

Skill: Gather Your Supplies

- New pouch
- Washcloth/wipes/soft paper towels –to clean your skin
- Sizing template to measure your stoma and size the opening
- Pen to trace the size of your stoma
- Scissors to cut the opening
- A small plastic bag for the soiled pouch
- Skin barrier paste (optional) to fill uneven areas in the skin

- Skin barrier powder (optional) to absorb the moisture from weepy skin
- Pouch deodorant (optional) to decrease the odor when emptying the pouch

Skill: Remove the Old Pouch

1. Begin by peeling away one corner of the barrier.

2. Work around the rest of the barrier, pushing down on the skin at each point while at the same time pulling the barrier away from the skin. Some people use an adhesive remover, a piece of wet paper towel, or a washcloth with warm water to help remove the pouch barrier from the skin.

3. Place the old pouch in a plastic waste bag.
4. If your pouch has a closure clip, do not throw it in the trash. The clamp can be reused.

Skill: Clean and Inspect

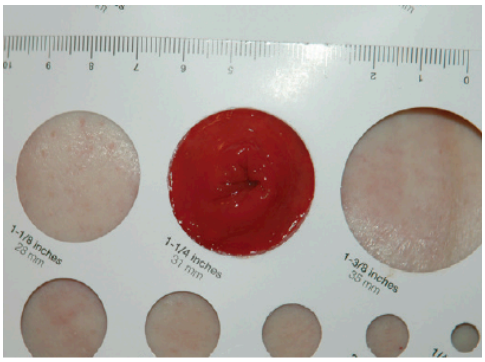
1. Inspect your stoma for color. The stoma should be red and moist.
2. Inspect the skin for redness or irritation. The skin should look like the rest of the skin on your abdomen. You can use a mirror to check the skin around the stoma.
3. Clean the skin around the stoma with warm water. Oils may keep your skin barrier from sticking. Do not use soaps/cleansers with oil or perfumes. Do not use baby wipes that have oil, moisturizing cream, or alcohol.
4. Gently pat the skin dry.
5. If the skin around the stoma is irritated or weepy, you can apply skin barrier powder. The powder will absorb the moisture. Remember that the new barrier will not stick well if your skin is moist. You may need to dab or spray the powder with skin sealant/skin prep.

Skill: Measure and Cut the Opening

It is important to measure the stoma and make sure the opening of the barrier fits right to the edge of the stoma. For the first three months after your surgery,
your stoma will continue to shrink in size as your swelling goes down. In the beginning, you will have to measure your stoma with each pouch change to make sure you have the right size opening. After that, you will be able to pre-cut your pouch opening from your template, or order pre-cut pouches.

1. Cover the stoma opening. Place a piece of tissue or gauze pad over the stoma while you are measuring to catch any leakage.

2. Measure the stoma. Use your measuring grid and find the size that fits close to the edge of the stoma where the skin and stoma meet. If your stoma isn't round, your WOC nurse or doctor can make you a custom template.



3. Place the measuring grid on the back of the pouch barrier and trace the correct size.

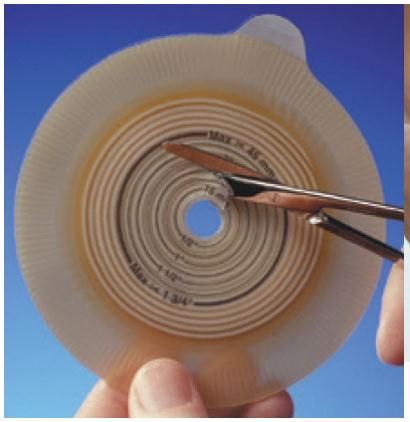
4. Use scissors to cut an opening in the skin barrier, closely following the traced shape. If you are using a one-piece system, place your finger into the small pre-cut opening and push away the pouch before you start to cut. Be careful not to cut through the front of the pouch. If you cut the pouch, do not tape it closed. It will leak and give off an odor.

5. Center the new opening over the stoma to make sure it fits along the stoma edge. Re-cut and adjust the opening as needed.

To practice:

- Gather your supplies in the skills kit.
- Use the stoma practice model, measuring guide, and pouch to:
  - Measure and cut an opening.
  - Apply a new pouch to the model.

Skill: Apply the new Pouch



1. Remove the covering from the back of the skin barrier.

2. Center the cut opening in the pouch's barrier over the stoma.

3. Place the barrier on the skin around the stoma. Press down on all sides for 30 to 60 seconds to make sure it is firmly applied.

4. Close the opening if you are using a drainable pouch.

5. Lower the pouch.

6. If you use a belt to secure your pouch, clip it in place.

7. Date and keep the paper from backing to use as your template for the next pouch change.

To practice:

- Take out your sample pouch.
- Close the drainage opening at the bottom of the pouch.
- At the top opening in the skin barrier, fill it 1/3 full with water.
- Remove the paper backing and place the pouch on your skin on your lower abdomen.
- Empty the pouch sitting on or standing by the toilet.

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