

## Reversal of Your Stoma

Your surgeon will discuss with you, your options on reversal of your stoma. If you are a candidate for a reversal, they will discuss with you how the surgery will occur and the expectations after surgery.

### **The Surgery**

You will be required to have a general anaesthetic for this surgery and can expect to be in hospital for 3 – 7 days post operatively to recover. Diet and fluids will be introduced slowly over the course of these days in hospital to ensure your bowel is working appropriately prior to discharge.

### **Bowel function following reversal**

When your bowels first start to work after reversal, you can expect that the stool will likely be very liquid in consistency and you may pass small, frequent amounts throughout the day. You may also get very little warning that you need to use your bowels (urgency) and sometimes may also not get to the toilet in time (incontinence). These symptoms should gradually improve in the following months after reversal surgery, as your bowel continues to recover.

Some factors that can affect your bowel function after reversal of your stoma include:

- How much bowel was removed in your initial surgery
- The section/s of bowel that were removed
- If you had had to have Chemotherapy/Radiotherapy post-surgery
- Your previous bowel habits

### **Dietary recommendations**

Please seek advice from a dietitian, or ensure that you are reviewed by a dietitian whilst you are in hospital, to get the best advice on how to help your body recover effectively from your reversal surgery, and what food/s and fluids are the best for your situation.

The following are some of the things that the dietitian may discuss with you, to help to keep your bowel motions regular and to improve bowel function, during the first few months after reversal.

- Initially eat smaller, more frequent meals and chew your food well.
- Foods such as white rice, white pasta, white bread can help to thicken watery stool.
- Ensure adequate intake of fluids, mainly water, to prevent dehydration
- Consult your Stomal Therapy Nurse, Pharmacist or Doctor for advice on medications that you may be able to take to help to thicken up your stool.

## **Skin Care**

The skin around your anus (your peri-anal area) can become sore and irritated from frequent loose stools, so it is important to protect and care for your skin well to prevent skin damage.

Tips for managing your skin:

- Gentle cleansing of the area post bowel motion with a soft wipe and warm water or a cleansing wipe, recommended for use. Eg. Abena wipes, water wipes.
- Apply a barrier cream/spray to the area after each bowel motion to protect the skin
- Avoid excessive wiping and rubbing of the skin to prevent friction and injury
- If you need to wear a continence aid (pads in your underwear or a protective undergarment), ensure they are changed if/when they become soiled to avoid skin damage.

## **Pelvic Floor Exercises**

Practising these on a daily basis, even prior to your stoma reversal surgery, can improve your ability to “hold on” to your bowels, in order to get to the toilet in time and avoid incontinence of stool.

See the following brochure, from the Continence Foundation of Australia for further information of how to perform pelvic floor exercised correctly:

[Bladder & bowel resources | Continence Foundation of Australia](#)

## **Important Information**

- You may have a small wound dressing over the site where your stoma used to be. Ensure this is taken care of on discharge, or seek advice from your GP if this wound needs attention.
- If the wound becomes painful, red, or starts leaking fluid, contact your GP
- Avoid lifting and straining for approximately 6 weeks after surgery to reduce your risk of developing a hernia.
- Resume activities slowly as your body allows, as it is likely to take several weeks to recover
- If your bowel has been joined back together, very low, please avoid inserting anything into your anus which may affect this join
- Attend your follow-up appointments with your surgical team to ensure recovery is progressing and no complications have arisen
- Notify your Ostomy Association following your reversal to cancel your membership and return any unused supplies.