

Patient Information Leaflet



Going home after Stoma Surgery

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Harrow Borough

If you live in the London Borough of Harrow then you will be followed up in the Stoma Clinic two weeks after discharge. The aim of this appointment is to check that you are managing your stoma care at home.

The stoma care nurse is only responsible for the care and management related to your stoma. If you have a wound that requires dressings then the district nurses will be responsible for this.

Outside the Harrow Borough

If you live outside the Harrow Borough you will be referred to your local stoma care nurse who is based in your area. The stoma care nurses at St Mark's and Northwick Park Hospitals will inform your local stoma care nurse of your contact details, the surgery you have had, appliances you are using and generally how you are managing the stoma. Once discharged they will contact you and arrange follow ups in your local area. You will be given the name and contact number of your local stoma care nurse on discharge so you can make contact with them as well.

Stoma care clinics

The stoma care department has stoma care clinics that you can attend for if you are having problems. These are run on alternate Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons.

If you need to see a stoma care nurse please call the department and speak to the department administrator who can arrange an appointment for you. If the phone is not answered then please leave a message with your name and telephone number and we will get back to you as soon as possible to arrange an appointment.

All patients who live in the Harrow Borough will receive a two-week follow up appointment with a stoma care nurse approximately after discharge from hospital. It is expected that you attend this appointment as part of your ongoing care and treatment. If the date and time does not suit you then please call the department to arrange another time.

Our Outpatient Clinic Provides

- Ongoing support to all ostomists
- Particle help and advice
- Colostomy irrigation information, advice and teaching
- Support garment measuring service up to date information
- Psychological and sexual advise
- Support group information and networking

Transport

If you require transport for the Stoma Outpatient Clinic you will need to contact your G.P. who will be able to provide this for your initial session.

In future, if you require transport and meet the criteria, a voluntary service may be provided. There may be a small charge for this if you do not live within the voluntary perimeters.

Convalescence

In the first three months following stoma formation surgery it can be a difficult time for ostomates (people with stomas). There are many things to learn and adjust to.

Before leaving hospital you will be able to care for your stoma. You will be given supplies of your stoma equipment and advised about obtaining further supplies. It is important to look after yourself, but also to increase your strength and stamina back towards the level you were at before surgery. Rest can be just as important as increasing your stamina.

Exercise

This is achieved by performing gentle exercises. Walking may be all that you should be doing in the first three months after surgery.

Strenuous activities such as swimming or the gym should not be undertaken for three months and then should be gradually reintroduced. Ask at the gym if there are any special precautions that you, as an individual, need to undertake. Swimming should commence gently by using a float and kicking your legs.

When undertaking sports, if there is a risk of damage to the stoma, it can be useful to wear a stoma shield for protection. These are available on prescription, ask your stoma care nurse.

Lifting

It is important after surgery not to lift too soon as you risk damaging your abdomen. Even if the suture line is healed completely the muscles below take many weeks or months to heal. It is advisable to lift nothing heavier than a jug of water for three months after surgery. This means you may need help to undertake general duties such as cleaning (vacuum cleaners are heavy to move about), washing (wet washing is heavy to lift), shopping (food is heavy to carry), even caring for children or others may involve activities that may put strain on the abdomen.

Driving

Driving is often not to be undertaken for at least six weeks after surgery, but people may wait for three months. It is essential that you will not harm yourself or others when driving and you must therefore be able to undertake an emergency stop safely. It is also sensible to check with your insurance company to ensure that you are covered legally in the event of an accident.

Work

Returning to work depends upon the type of surgery and of work you do. It is advisable not to return to work until after your clinic follow-up to ensure that the doctors feel that you are fit to return to work, this is often six to eight weeks. Your GP can provide you with a sick certificate after your discharge home from the hospital, for your employers. Some people find that returning to work for short days or part-time initially can be beneficial.

Clothes

Initially after surgery many people choose to wear loose clothing around the abdomen while the wounds are healing. It is hoped that eventually you will be able to wear the same clothes that you had prior to surgery. Some people choose to wear special undergarments to provide support or that hide the appliance. Some gentlemen prefer braces to belts around their abdomen.

Sex

Initially after surgery it is not advisable to undertake sexual activities. The time taken for these to resume also depends upon the surgery undertaken. Waiting until after the outpatient clinic appointment is advisable.

If you require any advice, please contact your stoma care nurse.

Contact details:

St Mark's Hospital, Watford Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 3UJ

Stoma Care Dept. - 020 8235 4110
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