

## Going home after stoma forming surgery

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This leaflet gives you information about your recovery when you go home after stoma forming surgery.

### For people living in the Borough of Harrow

If you live in the London Borough of Harrow then you will be followed up in the stoma clinic 2 weeks after going home. The aim of this appointment is to check that you are managing your stoma care at home. It is important that you attend this appointment as part of your ongoing care and treatment.

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 community nurses will be responsible for this.

### For people living outside the Harrow Borough

If you live outside the London Borough of Harrow you will be referred to a stoma specialist nurse who works in your area. The stoma specialist nurses at St Mark's and Northwick Park Hospitals (part of London North West Healthcare NHS Trust) will give your local stoma care nurse contact details to you before you go home. The stoma specialist nurse local to your home will be contacted so that they are aware of you and your needs. Once you are home your new local stoma specialist nurse will contact you and arrange follow up. If you do not hear from them within a week or so, please contact them yourself on the number provided.

### Stoma care clinics

The stoma care department at St Mark's Hospital runs stoma care clinics that you can attend if you are having problems. If you need to see a stoma care nurse please telephone the department and speak to one of the stoma care team or leave a message with your name and telephone number. The stoma specialist nurse will telephone you back to arrange an appointment.

### Recovering at home

The first 3 months after stoma formation surgery, can be a difficult time. 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 how to get 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

Walking is something you should do when you are in hospital and at home. You should gradually increase your exercise and increase what you lift, but stop if something is uncomfortable.

Strenuous activities such as swimming or the gym should not be undertaken for around 3 months and then should be gradually reintroduced. Ask at the gym if there are any special precautions that you need to take. Swimming should start 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 so ask your stoma care nurse.

There is some evidence that by undertaking abdominal exercises and wearing a support belt, the risk of a parastomal hernia (hernia around the stoma) can be reduced. Please speak to your stoma specialist nurse about this at your first clinic follow-up appointment.

## Driving

Driving is often not to be undertaken for several weeks after surgery, but people may wait for several months. It is essential that you will not harm yourself or others when driving and you must therefore be able to make 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 on the type of surgery you have had and the type 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 enough. Your GP can provide you with a fitness for work statement (sick certificate) after you go home from the hospital, for your employers. Some people find that returning to work for shorter days or part-time initially can be beneficial.

## Clothes

After surgery many people choose to wear loose clothing around the abdomen while the wounds are healing. It is expected 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.

## Sexual relations

After surgery it is advisable to resume sexual relations when you feel ready. How long this will take depends on the surgery you have had. If you have any problems ask your doctor or stoma specialist nurse for advice.

## Summary

To help you to return to normal as quickly as possible, you need to actively participate in your recovery. Follow the instructions provided in this information sheet and also instructions given to you by your stoma specialist nurse or doctor.

## Contact details

Stoma specialist nurses at St Mark's Hospital  
020 8235 4110

Pouch care team at St Mark's Hospital  
020 8235 4126

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## General Trust Information

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS is a confidential service for people who would like information, help or advice about the services provided by any of our hospitals. Please call 0800 783 4372 between 10am–4pm or e-mail [lnwh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:lnwh-tr.PALS@nhs.net). Please note that this service does not provide clinical advice so please contact the relevant department directly to discuss any concerns or queries about your upcoming test, examination or operation.

**For a translation of this leaflet or for an English version in large print, audio or Braille please ask a member of staff or call 0800 783 4372.**