

After the reversal operation to close your ileostomy / colostomy your bowel will take some time to begin to work properly again. You may have some liquid bowel motions (diarrhoea) for the first 2-3 days before it settles down.

In some people it may take at least 6 months before the bowel motion becomes firm. It is also fairly common to pass looser and more frequent and irregular stools than you may have been used to.

It is normal to have urgent bowel movements for several weeks after your operation. In the first few weeks these can be 4 times a day or more. The bowel movements will then settle into a more usual and predictable pattern. Your symptoms should improve over the first year after your reversal. If you had a low join in your bowel and /or pelvic radiotherapy this urgency may continue for a longer period of time.

What can I do to help?

The following may help:

- Chew your food well
- Eat small meals and eat often until your appetite returns
- Adjust the food you eat. Taking loperamide, metamucil or konsyl D may help. Check with your stoma nurse first
- Foods that are high in fibre can be more difficult for your bowel to digest to begin with. Add more fibre gradually to your diet
- If your bowel motion is loose try adding mashed potato, rice pudding, semolina, sago, banana, grated apple, white bread, marshmallows to your meals
- If you feel constipated increase your water intake and/or add in fruit juice and kiwifruit.

Caring for your anal skin

Frequently wiping your bottom (especially if you have loose bowel motions) can make the skin around your anus very sore and tender. You may find it helpful to:

- Use skin wipes (baby wipes) that have aloe vera. They can be soothing to use after each bowel motion
- Applying a barrier cream e.g. Sudocrem or a Zinc ointment after each bowel motion to help protect the skin
- If the skin is broken or raw and causing anal discomfort, salt baths can help (2 cups of salt to 10-15cms of bath water).

Caring for your wound

You will have a dressing on your closure site. The district nurse may need to change your dressings. If your wound becomes inflamed and painful you will need to see your doctor (GP).

When can I drive?

We advise that you wait for a few weeks (and check with your insurance company) before you start to drive again.

Helping to prevent Hernias

It will take time for your body to recover and you will need to have some time off work.

To help prevent hernias it is important that you do not lift anything in the first 6 weeks after your surgery.

After discharge

During the first few weeks, while your bowel pattern settles down you will be contacted by the stoma nurse. You will then be discharged from the Community Health Service.

Please return any leftover stoma supplies you have to the stoma nurse.

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Contacting the Stoma Nurse:

Contact the stoma nurse if you have any questions or concerns regarding the above.

If you need to speak to the stoma nurses they can be contacted by phoning (04) 918 6375 during office hours 8 am – 4.30 pm Monday to Friday (excluding Public Holidays).

If they are not able to answer the phone please leave a message on the answer machine. The nurses will get back to you as soon as possible.

If your call is urgent please phone Wellington Regional Hospital on (04) 3855 999. During ***normal working hours*** ask the hospital operator to contact the stoma nurses. ***Afterhours*** ask the hospital operator to contact the district nurse on call. Give the hospital operator your contact details and the district nurse will phone you.

Contact us

If you wish to contact a stoma nurse phone:

(04) 918 6375 8am – 4.30pm

Monday – Friday (excluding Public Holidays)

After hours phone:

Kapiti: (04) 903 0224

Kenepuru: (04) 918 2011

Wellington: (04) 806 2556

Essential phone calls only over weekends and evenings