

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR 1 PIECE OSTOMY SKIN BARRIER

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To keep your ostomy working well and to prevent discomfort and infection, your skin barrier needs to be changed on a regular basis. Every 3 to 5 days if you have an ileostomy and every 7-10 days if you have a colostomy.

However, if you see any leakage, have burning or itching skin around the pouch, or feel like your pouch isn't sticking to your skin, change the skin barrier right away.

The best time to change your skin barrier is when your stoma is less active, usually first thing in the morning before you eat, or 2 hours after eating.

When changing your skin barrier, always follow the specific instructions provided by your healthcare provider or WOC nurse. Here are some things to keep in mind.

Have all of your supplies ready including: a new pouch and skin barrier, a washcloth and soap or wipes, a sizing template to measure your stoma, scissors, a small plastic bag and any skin protection products you may use.

Peel away the old skin barrier and pouch. You may find an adhesive remover or wet paper towel can help make removing the skin barrier easier. Throw the old pouch away in a small plastic bag. At this point, take a moment to check your stoma for any changes. Your stoma should be red and moist, like the inside of your mouth. Also, check the skin around the stoma for any redness or irritation.

Next, clean the area around your stoma with soap and warm water. Do not use soaps or lotions with oils or perfumes because they can irritate your skin. Do not use wipes that contain oil, moisturizing cream or alcohol. Gently pat the skin dry.

As your stoma heals from surgery it will get smaller and it may change over time. To avoid leaks, it is important to make sure your pouch always fits properly around the stoma.

Use the measuring template to find the correct size of the opening you will need. To do this, hold the template as close as possible to the edge of the stoma where it meets your skin. Now, line up the template with the cut lines on your new pouch. Cut the opening out carefully along the line that best matches your stoma size, making sure you don't cut through both layers of the bag.

Double check the size of the opening over your stoma. If it does not fit along the stoma edge, recut it and try again. It is important to get a good fit to avoid leaks and infection.

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Remove the covering from the back of the wafer. You may choose to use a skin barrier paste to create a better seal. If you do, apply a ring of skin barrier paste to the back of the opening of the new pouch. Center the opening over your stoma. Press down on all sides for about 30 to 60 seconds to make sure it stays in place.

You may want to write the date on the paper backing so you remember when to change your pouch next. You can use it as a guide when you change your pouch again.

Changing your skin barrier may take some time at first.

"Any help that you can get from anyone when you're first starting this, take it."

But the more you do it, the easier it will become.

"It's gotten very easy. It's like second nature to change my bag."

If you have any questions about how to change your pouch, talk to your healthcare provider or WOC nurse. They are there to help and can give you tips that can make changing your skin barrier easier and more comfortable for you.