# What is an Ileostomy?

An Ostomy is a small opening, made during surgery, to help you have a bowel movement.

> *"This is something very personal. And this is something that you have to adjust to. But you become very comfortable with it. And you just have to remember this is, it's a change. But it's a change that you can live with."*

You may need an ostomy if you have had a disease or injury that damages your intestines, making it difficult to discharge waste on your own. Cancer, trauma, inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or diverticulitis, and some birth defects may lead to an ostomy.

Depending on the reason for your ostomy, you may have it for just a short time or for the rest of your life.

To understand your Ostomy better, let's take a look at what happens in your body when you eat.

Food passes through your mouth, down your esophagus, and into your stomach where it is broken down into small pieces.

The food then travels through your small intestine, and into your large intestine, or colon, feeding your body nutrients along the way.

What is left is then discharged through your rectum and anus.

If the damage takes place in the ileum, the third part of your small intestine, you will have an Ileostomy to bring the small intestine through the abdominal wall to form a stoma.

The waste from what you eat will now come out of your body through the stoma.

The location and size of your stoma depends on the type of surgery you have, but most stomas are round, red in color, and stick out from your body. It may look like the skin on the inside of your mouth.

You won't be able to feel or control when the waste leaves your body. Instead you will need to wear an Ostomy pouch.

You can have a healthy, active life while living with an Ostomy. As you get used to it, the care you take will get easier, and just part of your daily routine.

> *"At the end of the day, remember, you're really no different. You are the same person that went into the hospital and came out. You will get to the point where you really don't even realize it's there."*

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