

# COLOSTOMY: FINDING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Sometimes when cancer is detected in your colon or rectum, a colostomy is performed. A colostomy surgically creates a small opening in the lower abdomen or a stoma through which stool can exit the body. The waste is captured in a small bag (as known as an ostomy pouch) that is worn on the body and can be easily disposed of.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

Here is a list of questions that you may want to ask your health care team beforehand:

- What can I expect when using an ostomy pouch or appliance?
- How will a colostomy change my daily activities?
- Can a colostomy affect me being intimate with my partner?
- Do I need to adjust my diet?
- Will my insurance cover the cost of ostomy supplies? Are ostomy supplies covered under Medicare?
- What should I do if nothing is coming out of the stoma into the pouch? When should I seek medical assistance?

Some hospitals have ostomy nurses who help with learning the techniques needed to fit the appliance properly. These nurses or your health care team may also be able to connect you with local resources for supplies.



## SEEK SUPPORT

Adjusting to a cancer diagnosis can be challenging enough; adjusting to physical challenges that might come with it can seem overwhelming. It's completely normal to wonder how you will manage with an ostomy pouch and a "new normal." Seeking out information and support will help you to understand what to expect and how to best cope with change. Oncology social workers are licensed professionals who counsel people affected by cancer, providing emotional support and helping people access practical assistance. There may be other local organizations that provide assistance for ostomy supplies. CancerCare's oncology social workers can help you find financial resources to help with these expenses. Call 800-813-HOPE (4673) for more information.

## COLOSTOMY RESOURCES

Here are some resources that might be able to help:

### **CancerCare's A Helping Hand**

[www.cancercaare.org/helpinghand](http://www.cancercaare.org/helpinghand)

*CancerCare's A Helping Hand (www.cancercaare.org/helpinghand). This is a searchable, online database of financial and practical assistance available for people with cancer. This comprehensive online tool features up-to-date contact information and descriptions for hundreds of national and regional organizations offering financial help to people with cancer. You can search by diagnosis, zip code and type of assistance.*

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### **Osto Group**

www.ostogroup.org  
877-678-6690

*The Osto Group is an organization that receives donations of unused ostomy products from all over the country. In return, the Osto Group provides uninsured individuals with ostomy products. Each individual must pay for shipping and handling.*

### **ConvaTec's Ostomy Access Program**

800-422-8811

*ConvaTec's Ostomy Access Program provides ostomy supplies to financially eligible patients on a temporary basis, at no charge. To qualify, patient may not have any prescription assistance through third-party coverage such as Medicaid, Medicare, Private Insurance or Health Maintenance Organization (HMO).*

### **The United Ostomy Associations of America**

www.ostomy.org  
800-826-0826

*The United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc. (UOAA) is an organization that provides guidebooks (including TSA security screening tips), reference cards and brochures, as well as a message board where patients and caregivers can exchange information and answer questions. The United Ostomy Association of America can also connect you with peer-to-peer support as well.*

### **NeedyMeds**

www.needymeds.org  
800-503-6897

*NeedyMeds provides resource to helping people locate assistance programs to help them afford their medications and other health care costs.*



### **CancerCare® Can Help**

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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