



# STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO EMPTYING AND CHANGING THE OSTOMY POUCH



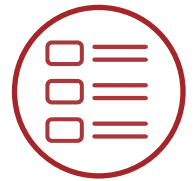
A publication of United Ostomy  
Associations of America, Inc. (UOAA)

Copyright © 2024 UOAA. All Rights Reserved.

Disclaimer: This document contains information developed by United Ostomy Associations of America. This information does not replace medical advice from your health care provider. You are a unique individual and your experiences may differ from that of other patients. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition, or your treatment plan.

---

# Table of Contents



- 5 Step by Step Guide for Emptying the Pouch
- 7 Step by Step Guide for Changing the Pouch
- 12 Helpful Teaching/Comfort Aides

---

## Author

**Judith J. Stellar**, MSN CRNP, CWOCN

Wound, Ostomy Nurse Practitioner

Advanced Practice Clinical Leader—Master Level

The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia

## Contributor

**Maryanne Lewis**, BSN, RN, CWOCN

Texas Children’s Hospital

## Reviewers

Reviewed by members of the Children, Teens and Young Adults  
with Ostomies Web Pages Development Committee



This guide is available free in electronic form from United Ostomy Associations of America (UOAA).

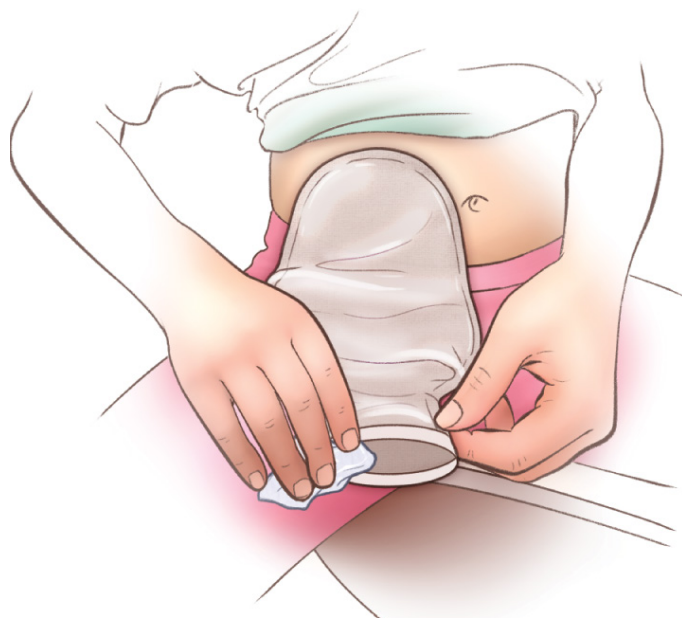
[www.ostomy.org](http://www.ostomy.org) . [info@ostomy.org](mailto:info@ostomy.org) . 800-826-0826

---

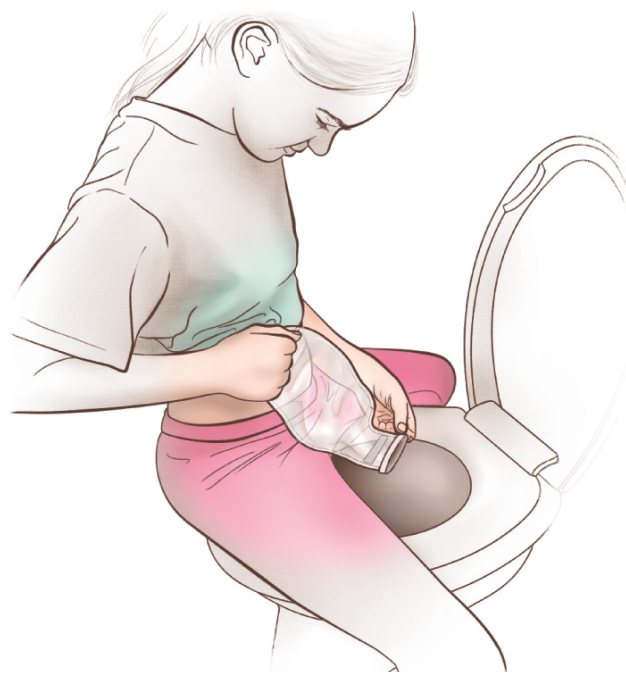
# Step by Step Guide for Emptying the Pouch

- ✓ Wash your hands well with soap and water (you and your child).
- ✓ Empty the pouch when it is 1/3 or 1/2 full of stool. The pouch will leak or could come off sooner due to the weight of the pouch if it is full of urine, stool and/or gas. The pouch should also be emptied before changing.
- ✓ Gather necessary items needed to empty the pouch.
- ✓ Raise the end of the pouch to open, then lower it to drain into toilet or other container.

**Tip:** When emptying into the toilet, place a piece of toilet paper on the surface of the water in the toilet bowl. This will help prevent splashing of water and stool as the pouch is emptied. Sitting backward on the toilet may be easier for emptying.



© 2024 Body Scientifico



© 2024 Body Scientifico

- ✓ For infants it is fine to empty the pouch into a diaper.
- ✓ Clean the opening of the pouch after emptying—can use disposable wipes for this.
- ✓ If using lubricant or deodorizer, place into pouch then close or re-clamp.
- ✓ Wash your hands well with soap and water (you and your child!).



---

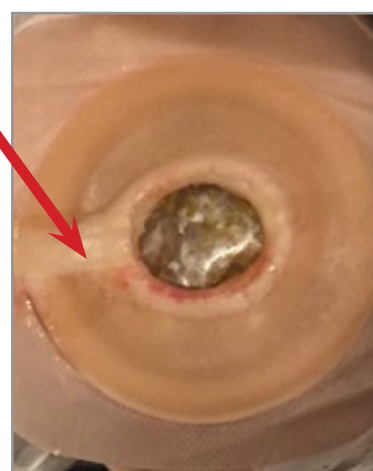
# Step by Step Guide for Changing the Pouch

- ✓ Wash your hands well with soap and water (you and your child).
- ✓ Gather the necessary items for a pouch change including barrier rings, paste, etc. This includes any toys, books, tablets or other distractions for the younger child.
- ✓ Have the barrier or wafer cut and ready unless you are using a “pre-cut” product.
- ✓ It may be helpful to time the pouch change, if possible, when output is slower, especially for ileostomies, so avoid changing soon after meals / feedings.
- ✓ For a urinary stoma—urine will drain almost constantly. It will be helpful to use soft gauze or a soft absorbent paper towel to wick away the urine so have this ready. Some people use a tampon to wick away the urine and keep skin dry during a pouch change.
- ✓ Empty the pouch before removing.
- ✓ Remove the pouch: start by lifting at the edges and pushing the skin away and down as you remove the adhesive barrier, commonly called the “push-pull technique”. You can use commercially available adhesive remover or a warm moist soft cloth to help lift off the pouch. Some prefer to remove the pouch in the shower or bath.
- ✓ It may be helpful to check the underside of the barrier or wafer to see if there is any sign of stool or urine leaking underneath. If so, you may need to use extra barrier ring or paste at those areas.

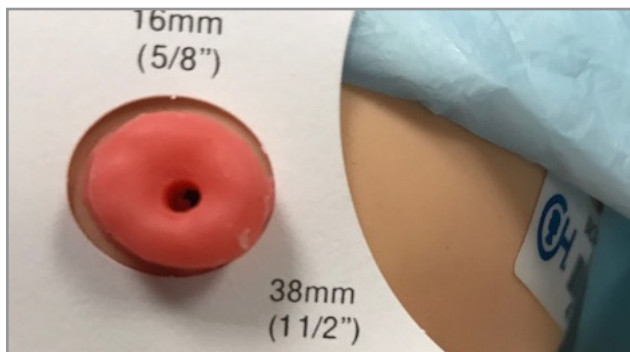


*Area where stool leaked underneath and caused the wafer to break down*

*Leakage Example*



- ✓ Dispose of the old wafer and pouch into a plastic bag and then into the trash. Most ostomy supplies come with plastic bags to dispose of the old pouch.
- ✓ Clean the surrounding skin with warm water. Using a mild soap is optional. It is important to use soap without moisturizer since this will leave a slippery film on the skin and may interfere with the pouch sticking well to the skin.
- ✓ If soap is used, rinse the skin with warm water.
- ✓ Inspect the surrounding skin for any breakdown or irritation. Inspect the stoma for any changes in color, size, or output.
- ✓ After cleansing, ensure the skin is completely dry. It may be helpful to use a soft piece of gauze or tissue around the base of the stoma like a “turtle neck” to make sure that the area at the base is very dry.
- ✓ If there is skin breakdown, apply a light dusting / thin layer of stoma powder only to the moist open areas and brush off the excess. *Do not apply stoma powder if the skin is intact*, since the powder can interfere with the wafer sticking. Apply any other products to the skin as directed by your wound ostomy nurse or provider. If the wafer has a tape border and you/your child seems to be sensitive to that, you can apply skin protectant just to that outer area in a “picture frame” pattern. The skin protectant should be completely dry before placing the wafer/pouch.
- ✓ Use the measuring guide or a pre-made template to determine the size of the stoma. The wafer should be cut 1/16 of an inch large than the stoma. This helps protect as much of the surrounding skin as possible without being too tight a fit around the stoma.



Measuring Guide Template



Using Measuring Guide on Wafer

- ✓ For round shaped stomas, line up the measuring guide to the back of the wafer and trace a pattern.



---

## If Your Child has a Loop or Side-by-Side Stoma

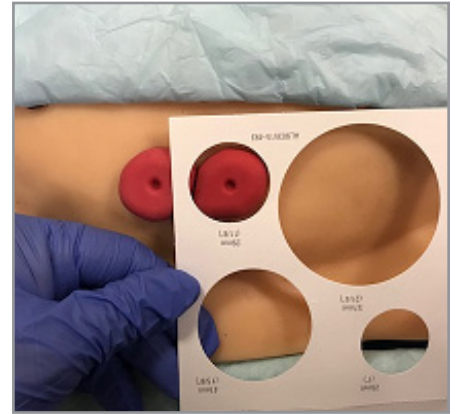
- ✓ If the stoma is a loop ostomy, it will not be round but oval shaped. You may need to do two measurements—one to measure how long (up and down) and one to measure how wide (side to side). Then trace an oval shaped pattern on the wafer to match the size and shape of the stoma.



*Loop Stoma*

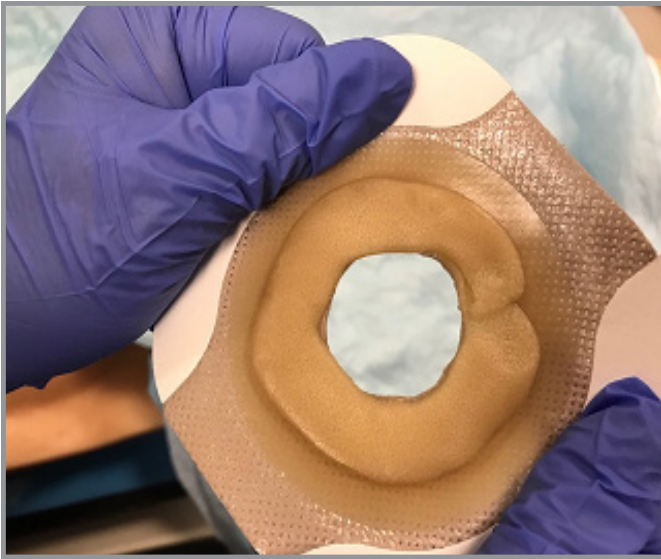


*Loop or Side-by-Side Stomas*



- ✓ Using the pattern from the template, cut the wafer and check for fit before removing the plastic backing of the wafer. The opening should only be about 1/16th of an inch larger than the stoma so nearly all the skin is protected.
- ✓ It may be helpful, especially for smaller barriers and wafers, to warm these up first by placing between your hands or even under your arm. Your body heat will help to soften the barrier so it will stick better to the skin.
- ✓ Remove the paper backing. This can be saved as a template for the next pouch change.

- ✓ If using a barrier ring, apply to the back of the wafer at the edge of the cut opening. The barrier ring can also be placed on the skin at the base of the stoma. If the stoma is very small, you can break the barrier ring apart and only use a portion. You can mold it into a bead or “snake like” narrow piece by working it with your hands, warming it and making it easier to mold.

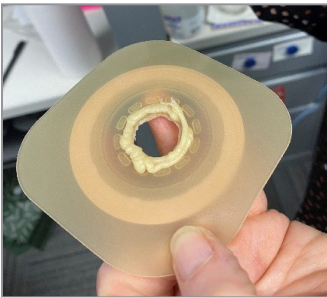


*Barrier Ring on Wafer*

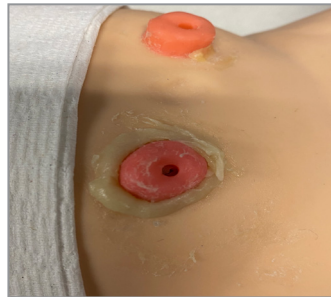


*Barrier Ring on Skin*

- ✓ If using paste, you can apply it to the cut edge of the wafer or can apply directly to the skin at the base of the stoma. For babies, smaller children, or those with smaller stomas, you can place paste in a syringe to get a thin “bead” of paste to place around the stoma base.



*Paste on Wafer*



*Paste on Skin*



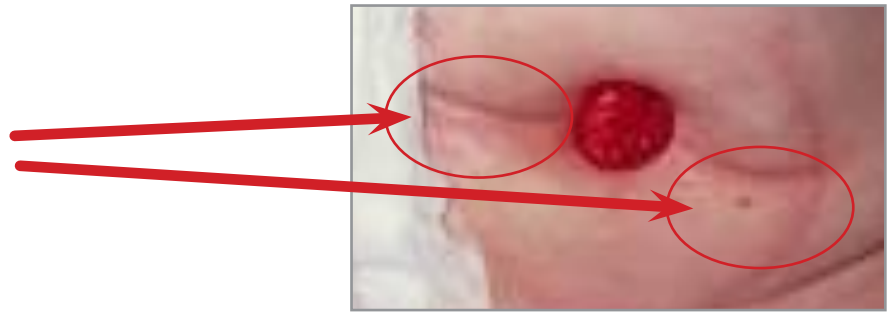
*Syringe with Paste*



*Beading Example*

- ✓ If there are any skin folds, creases or areas of scarring around the stoma that are not flat, you can use the barrier rings or paste to make the skin surface flatter before applying the new pouch.

*These areas should be filled in with a bead of paste or a small “snake like” piece of barrier ring to flatten out the skin around the stoma so the wafer can seal well.*



- ✓ Apply the wafer, gently pressing on the area immediately surrounding the stoma and then going outward to the outer edges.
- ✓ If using a 2-piece system, attach the pouch to the wafer.
- ✓ Close the opening of the pouch.
- ✓ Apply light pressure over the appliance and around the stoma right at the base for 30 to 60 seconds to help the barrier to mold to the skin.
- ✓ For urinary stomas: it may be necessary to connect the pouch to an overnight drainage bag for night-time collection of urine. Make sure the tubing does not get twisted. Having the pouch hooked up to drainage can eliminate the need to empty the pouch frequently during the night so your child and you can sleep.
- ✓ You may be instructed to add an ostomy belt to your child’s ostomy pouch. A tip to help make the pediatric belt softer on the skin and cover the plastic tabs, is to thread it through a headband.
- ✓ Always wash your hands well with soap and water after handling, emptying, or changing the ostomy appliance (you and your child!).



*Belt on Child*



*Pedi Belt with Headband*



*Pedi Belt threaded through Headband*

- ✓ Praise your child for a job well done! Give lots of hugs and/or high fives!

---

# Helpful Teaching/ Comfort Aides

Some helpful teaching “aides” available from ostomy related companies are pictured below and can be used with younger children when changing the pouch or for teaching and/or comfort purposes. These are just a few examples of what is available in the market today.



**SenSura® Mio Bunny**

Available to healthcare facilities  
via Coloplast sales representatives.



**Hollister Shadow Buddy**

<https://www.hollister.com/en/ostomycare/ostomy-clinical-education/pediatric-education/ostomy-shaow-buddies>



**Awesome Ollie Teddy Bear**

<https://www.awesomeostomy.com/>









[www.ostomy.org](http://www.ostomy.org)

UOAA promotes quality of life for people with ostomies and continent diversions through information, support, advocacy and collaboration.