

From One Ostomate to Another

The column where ostomates share their experiences and pass on their hints and tips.

In the last issue of *Tidings* we published the following query on the Readers' Writes page:

I have had a colostomy for four years now and have tried the usual ways of preventing pancaking from happening (lubricating the pouch, covering the filter etc.) to no avail, but wonder if anyone has come up with any other ideas.

Ione Lee

What is Pancaking?

This occurs when, instead of dropping to the bottom of the stoma pouch, the stoma output accumulates around the stoma. It may seep beneath the flange/baseplate which can lead to leakage and sore skin.

Thank you to all our readers who wrote to tell us about their experience of pancaking. Although we are not able to include all your letters and e-mails, below is a selection of the replies we received.

During the day, any form of restriction around the top of the stoma pouch will tend to cause pancaking. Frequent causes are from clothing (waistband/belt/support garment etc.) exerting an 'enclosing'

pressure on the output area, thus preventing the output from falling. Wearing high-waisted garments can move the belt line above the stoma and so relieve the problem of pancaking, but these garments are not currently very fashionable.

At night time, lying on ones back is always a problem for pancaking as gravity is unable to draw output away from the stoma towards the base of the pouch. The problem is aggravated by the weight of bedclothes pressing down on the accumulating output, and further aggravated by any firm or tight clothing. Lying on one side or the other tends to help a bit, and for those who always lie on a particular side then applying the night time pouch at an angle can also help to alleviate the problem.

If you are able and are 'allowed' to do so – take up irrigation. Pancaking becomes history.

A.D.

I have had a colostomy for about a year, and as soon as I got home from hospital I was having a problem with pancaking. I spent three days on the internet trying to find a solution and eventually found three.

The best of the three is a product called a *stoma bridge* which is available in two sizes. I use the smaller one which is similar in size to a sugar cube. One of the sides is sticky so you peel off the protective sticker and then insert the foam cube into the bag. I use two, which I stick on either side of the hole. The company that I dealt with is called

Opus Healthcare and they sent me some samples of a product made by *Clearway*.

I also use baby oil, and was advised to smear this inside the bag using my fingers. However, I found that even after doing that and washing my hands, the oil was still on my fingers and was getting onto other surfaces and ruining the adhesion, so now I use the spray bottles of baby oil and spray into the bag maybe three or four times. Since using this method I have had no more problems with pancaking.

I know this information is not new but it might still help.

B.M.

I find the *OakMed M-0320K Microskin Closed Pouch* the answer to pancaking. I suffered in the early years of having a colostomy and, until I found this pouch, nothing really felt safe. Pancaking, and not originally finding a suitable solution, was one of the reasons why I turned to irrigation which I also recommend if Ione hasn't tried it. Of course I do realise that many people are unable to irrigate for various reasons but if she is able to give it a try I can certainly say it changes your life of living with a colostomy. With regard to the *OakMed Microskin Pouch*, I believe they

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If you have an experience or anecdote you'd like to share, or hints and tips to pass on to other ostomates e-mail or write to the editorial team:

editor@colostomyassociation.org.uk

LIVING WITH A STOMA FROM OUR READERS

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also produce a two-piece with the same microskin flange. It is also worth mentioning the need to be particularly careful when removing the pouch from the skin as the adhesive is so good that it can make the skin sore if you try to remove it too quickly – best to use an adhesive remover and prise it away gently.

Lynda Sargeant

The reason I have pancaking is that just before it performs, my stoma retracts a bit. Because I gained weight after the op it now retracts into a valley. The flange of the bag (all the bags) is a bit rigid and the flange doesn't follow the stoma into the valley; it remains flat, level with the rest of the flange, creating a gap, hence the pancaking.

I tried a gadget which sounded as if it would work. It had a flange with a collar that sticks up into the pouch. You put this on first and apply the pouch over it. The problem was that the flange was rigid and the collar was soft, so the flange behaved like all flanges and stayed up there clear of the stoma when it retracted and the collar collapsed and was unable to keep the bag open. I wrote to the manufacturers to ask why the flange wasn't soft and the collar rigid but they didn't answer the letter.

Peggy Thomas

I have had my colostomy for seven years. For the first two years or so I was a martyr to pancaking. The over-efficient activity of the filters resulted in a powerful vacuum forming which effectively prevented any matter getting into the pouch and everything leaked under the flange. Sealing the filters gave some relief but did not always work, and could also result in troublesome ballooning.

I read a feature (maybe in *Tidings* but am not sure) by a stoma nurse who had found that some of her patients had benefitted by changing to OakMed pouches. On the basis that I had nothing to lose, I sent for samples and did find some improvement. I have used OakMed ever since, and while I cannot claim that I am trouble-free, on the whole life is much easier. There are still occasional leakages, and I have had the odd disaster (fortunately rare), but I would certainly recommend a trial of OakMed. Apparently the filters are unusual in some way – I think they allow the pressure to build up slightly before activating so the vacuum effect is avoided.

JD Wright

Pancaking is a subject often talked about on the Facebook group so I asked the question: "As it's a big problem for many, what helps you with pancaking?"

I had a good response with the top answers being:

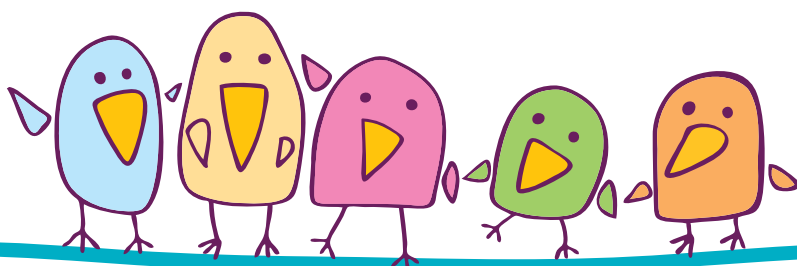
- 1 cover the filters to inflate the bag a little;
- 2 add a little lubricant to the bag (baby oil is most popular);
- 3 irrigation works well for those that can;
- 4 changing diet or drinking more; and
- 5 changing the type of bag you wear (mostly to a convex bag).

Sadly though, the most common reply (over a third of those that replied) was that they had never found a solution that works and they just have to put up with it!

So come on all you product designers there must be a fortune to be made by the one who solves this problem for all.

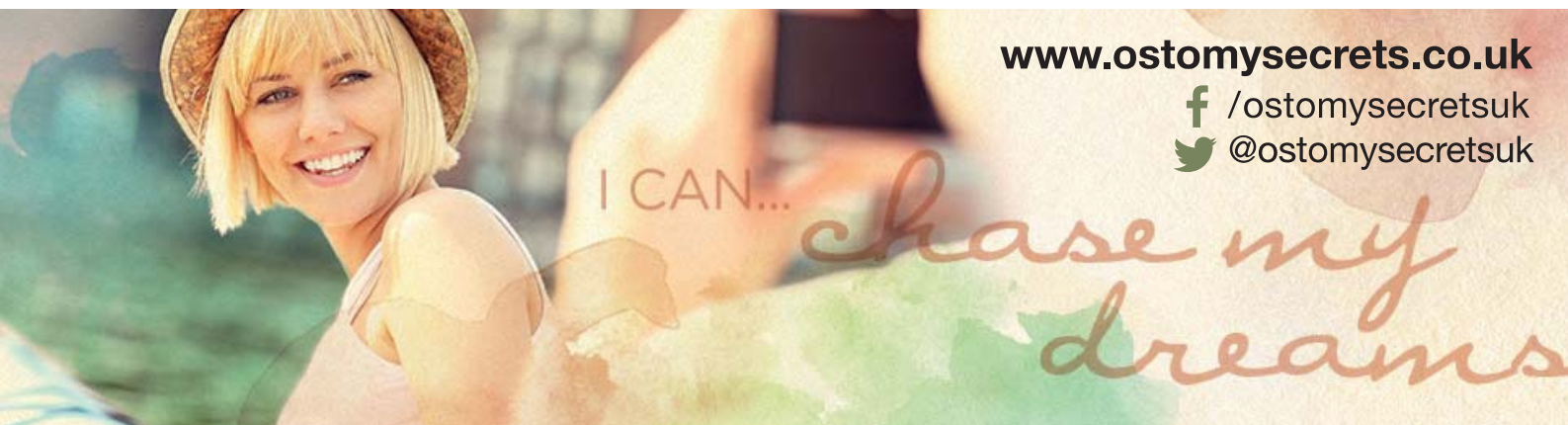
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