

What is a Stoma and who has one?

Stoma surgery involves the bowel and/or bladder being diverted through the abdomen so that bodily waste can be collected in a bag. 'Stoma' refers to the opening that the surgeon creates on a person's abdomen.

People who have had stoma surgery are often referred to collectively as 'ostomates'. Stoma surgery is used in the treatment of a range of conditions including cancer, diverticulitis, Crohn's & colitis, childbirth, endometriosis, trauma and medical negligence.

As an ostomate's stoma bag is attached directly to their abdomen and under their clothes, their condition is hidden.

Over 200,000 people are living with a stoma in the UK, an estimated 1 in 335 people have a stoma/s

What are the issues?

Accessible toilets often lack the facilities to make changing a stoma bag safe, clean and easy.

Accessible Toilet signage is frequently misleading. It can inadvertently suggest that the facilities are only for use by people with physical conditions/ disabilities.



Why make your toilets Stoma friendly?

Inadequate accessible toilet facilities act as a form of social exclusion. When an individual goes out, they need to be sure that if necessary, they can find a suitably equipped toilet in which to change their stoma bag.

Our research has also revealed that people are often verbally challenged and sometimes even physically assaulted when they use accessible toilets. Poor signage contributes to this problem.

The Stoma Friendly Toilet

Hooks

- To hang clothing and personal belongings whilst changing stoma bags.
- British Standards suggest two clothes hooks, one at 1050mm and the other at 1400mm above the floor.

Shelves

- To provide a sanitary surface on which to lay out medical supplies to change the stoma bag/s.
- Placement is important. The shelf needs to be positioned so that the person can stand in front of it and access their supplies. We suggest a flip up/down shelf if your toilet is small.
- For high or low-level cisterns, a separate changing shelf 125mm to 150mm deep and preferably 400mm wide, with its surface 950mm above floor level, should be provided.

Bin

- To enable the disposal of used stoma bags. To avoid embarrassment, this should ideally be located in the toilet cubicle.

Mirror

- Allows someone to see their stoma while changing their bag. Ideally this needs to be a full length mirror.

Accessible Toilet Signage

- Signage that draws attention to the hidden nature of some conditions and disabilities helps to reduce hostility towards users without an obvious physical impairment.

