


My body
My relationship



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Notes

Sometimes you think about questions when you are not in front of your Health Care Professional, this section is designed for you to jot these down to help you remember what it was you wanted to ask.



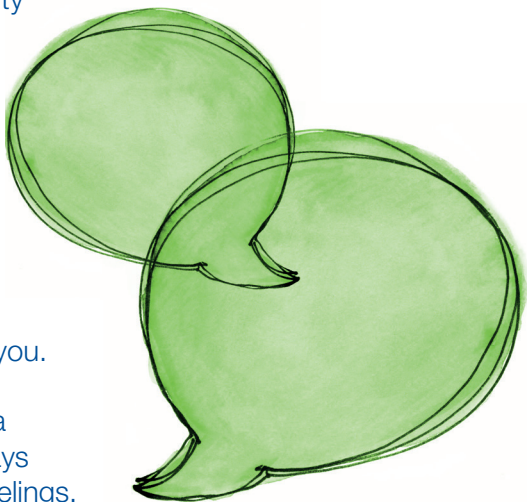
This booklet is designed to offer some insight and awareness into concerns some people may experience relating to intimacy and sexual activity following bowel surgery and the formation of a stoma.

Following stoma formation, it may take some time to adjust both physically and psychologically. Both men and women can experience changes to their perception of themselves and their lifestyle which may have an impact on personal relationships. Throughout your recovery and for a while afterwards, you may experience thoughts and feelings about your relationships that can give you concerns.

If you experience any concerns raised in this booklet or have any other questions please speak to your Stoma Care Nurse.

Sharing your feelings

Young, old, single, married, heterosexual or same sex relationship, having a stoma can affect your interest, desire, and ability to have a sexual and/or intimate relationship. Many people can find it difficult to talk about intimacy and sexual relationships: this can leave many questions unanswered and if not addressed may impact on relationships. Any change in your body image can affect how you feel about yourself and how you think that others see you. Talking through your concerns with partners, friends, GP or your Stoma Care Nurse can help you to find ways of addressing your thoughts and feelings.



After Surgery

It is advisable to allow at least 4-6 weeks to recover from abdominal surgery. However you can increase your physical activity as you feel comfortable and able to do so. You may find that having a stoma can affect the physical aspect of your relationship and the desire or ability to return to your normal sexual activity.

Sexuality and Relationships

Sexual function and relationships can be impacted following bowel surgery for both men and women.

Women

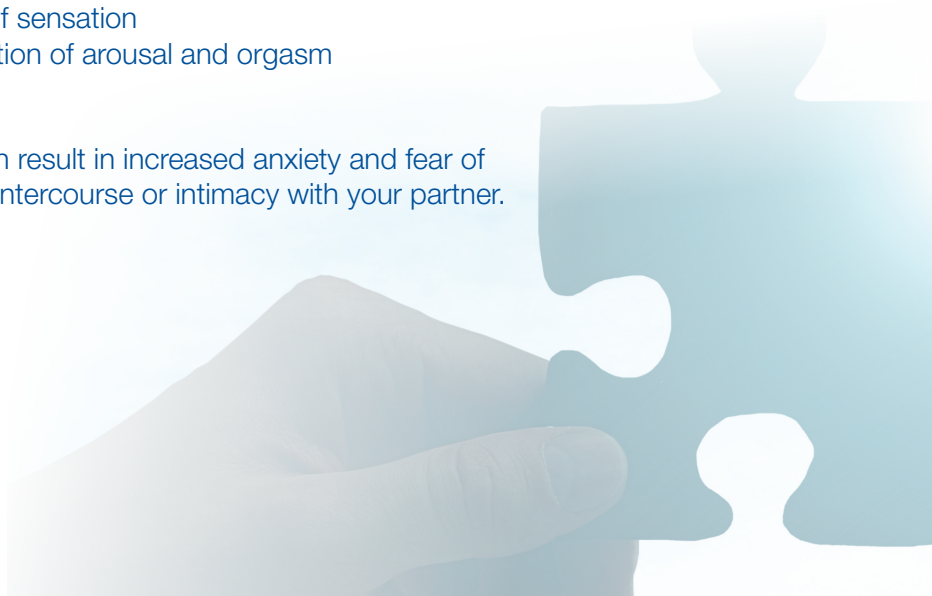
Nerves situated in the pelvic area may be disrupted following bowel surgery. Symptoms may include:

- loss of desire
- vaginal dryness

Nerve damage can also result in:

- loss of sensation
- alteration of arousal and orgasm
- pain

This can result in increased anxiety and fear of having intercourse or intimacy with your partner.



Men

Nerves situated in the pelvic area may be disrupted following bowel surgery. Symptoms may include:

- impotence – sometimes known as erectile dysfunction
- loss of desire
- loss of sensation
- ejaculatory dysfunction – inability to ejaculate

Lifestyle factors can also increase the risk, e.g. smoking, diabetes, excessive alcohol intake, substance misuse etc.

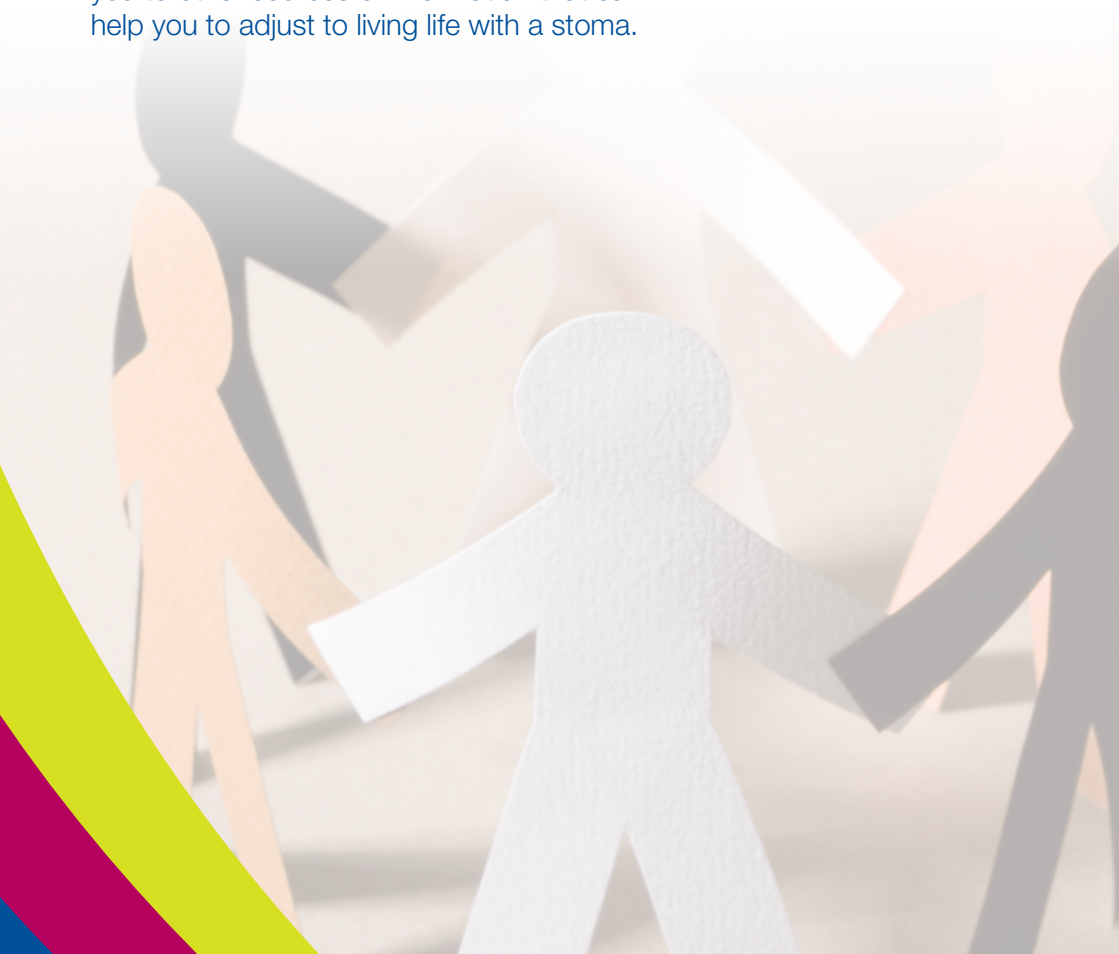
A less well known possible cause of erectile dysfunction may be a low testosterone level. Symptoms include: weight gain (specifically around the abdomen), heightened emotion, reduced facial or body hair, low sex drive, growth in breast tissue, fatigue, memory loss, sweating, low mood. The 'ADAM' (Androgen Deficiency in Ageing Men) is a self-test which enables you to identify symptoms associated with low testosterone. Should your score indicate the possibility of low testosterone levels, this can be confirmed via a blood test by your GP.



Finally...

Please do not suffer in silence. Don't let fear and embarrassment prevent you from seeking support and advice from your Stoma Care Nurse or your GP. They will be happy to discuss any concerns with you, offer advice and refer if necessary - the first step is to tell someone.

Everyone is an individual and we all need and want different things from our relationships. Health care professionals such as a Stoma Care Nurse or GP can work with you, or direct you to other sources of information that can help you to adjust to living life with a stoma.



Support Networks

Colostomy Association

Enterprise House
95 London Street
Reading
Berks
RG1 4QA
Tel: 0800 328 4257
www.colostomyassociation.org.uk

The Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Support Group (IA)

Peverill House
1-5 Mill Road Ballyclare
Co Antrim
BT39 9DR
Tel: 0800 0184 724
www.the-ia.org.uk

Urostomy Association

18 Foxglove Avenue
Utttoxeter
ST14 8UN
Tel: 0870 7707931
www.uagbi.org

Samaritans

Tel: 08457 90 90 90
www.samaritans.org

Macmillan Cancer Support

Tel: 0808 808 00 00

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

BACP House
15 St John's Business Park
Lutterworth
LE17 4HB
Tel: 01455 883300
www.bacp.co.uk

Relate National Marriage Guidance

Tel: 0300 100 1234
www.relate.org.uk

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual Foundation

Tel: 0345 3303030
lgbt.foundation

Gay Ostomates

email: glocontact1@aol.com
www.glo-uoaa.org

ADAM Self-Assessment Test

http://www.seekwellness.com/andropause/adam_quiz.htm

SecuriCare Home Delivery Service

Freephone Orderline

0800 318 965

Email: info@securicaremedical.co.uk

www.securicaremedical.co.uk

 facebook.com/securicare

 [@onestopstoma](https://twitter.com/onestopstoma) [@onestopcontinence](https://twitter.com/onestopcontinence)



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