

Ostomy Awareness Day is October 1, 2022

“Ostomies are Life-Savers”

According to the United Ostomy Association, approximately 725,000 to 1,000,000 Americans are living with an ostomy. Ostomy Awareness Day is celebrated each year on the first Saturday in October. This year's theme is *Ostomies are Life-savers*. Follow the United Ostomy Association on social media to view their events or go to www.ostomy.org/world-ostomy-day/. #OstomiesAreLifesavers and #OstomyDay2022



Three Things Nurses Can Do In Honor of Ostomy Awareness Day

1. Educate yourself about ostomies. Take the free [Hollister Ostomy course](#), look at the educational information on www.ostomy.org and the resources in this newsletter.
2. Get to know your facility's ostomy nurse(s). They are usually called Wound, Ostomy and Continence (WOC) nurses or Ostomy Management Specialists (OMS).
3. Join with UOAA and the entire ostomy community to spread the facts about ostomies and stop stigmas once and for all.

What's in a Name?

The name “ostomy” is a general term for a surgically created opening. The name of the ostomy reflects its location. It is important for you and your patient to know their type of ostomy. While there are many common traits of ostomies in general, each type has specific characteristics and care needs. For example, people with an ileostomy are at higher risk for dehydration than those with a colostomy. Learn more about ostomies at www.ostomy.org/what-is-an-ostomy/.

United Ostomy Association

United Ostomy Association www.ostomy.org is the best resource for people living with an ostomy. The UOAA has numerous printable information guides, videos and one page reference sheets. Many of the educational materials are also in [Spanish](#). Nurses can order free Ostomy educational materials at the link [here](#). There is a [page](#) dedicated to nurses and home health nurses. UOAA also has [Ostomy Academy](#) with virtual and on demand presentations. See the [UOAA flyer](#) for a summary of what they offer and see [10 reasons to love the UOAA](#).

Remember **PLEASE** when Caring for Patients with an Ostomy

Problem Management

Common ostomy problems are leakage, peristomal skin irritation and a poor fitting pouching system. Learn what's normal and abnormal and how to perform a good [assessment](#). Give and use tools, like the [Peristomal Assessment Guide](#), to manage problems and consult the ostomy nurse for complex or persistent problems. Patients can also look at resources and speak to other ostomates through online communities to get management tips. 🍵 Learn tips and tricks from the resources on the last page.

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Lifestyle Adaptation Tips

[Living with an ostomy](#) is an adjustment. It takes time and patients will have a lot of questions as they learn to navigate their life with their ostomy. Even if you're not an expert, you can still make sure they have information that addresses topics such as eating, activity and exercise, what to wear, working and traveling. The UOAA, all of the ostomy manufacturers and many supply companies have patient education on their websites.

Emotional Support

Ostomies are lifesavers, but it might not feel like that to a person with a new ostomy. An [emotional adjustment](#), and sometimes a grieving period, can occur before and after a person has ostomy surgery. The patient may also be dealing with a cancer or another life-changing diagnosis. Be aware of how you act and react around a patient with an ostomy. Providing emotional support is just as important as all of the physical tasks. Remember, there is a person attached to that ostomy. Encourage your patients to attend an ostomy support group even if they have a temporary ostomy. Let them know there are several online support groups and communities— see the resources in [Support for people with ostomies](#).

Advocacy

Ostomy Rights are Human rights. Be an advocate and promote self-advocacy in your patient. Help to clear up misconceptions patients and others may have about ostomies. Be your patient's voice when they can't speak up, making sure their concerns are heard and addressed. Read and have your patient read the [Ostomy and Continent Diversion Patient Bill of Rights](#). Consider becoming a [champion](#) for a person with an ostomy. See some advocate rock stars at www.ostomy.org/whos-raising-awareness/.

Sex and Intimacy Resources and Guidance

It can be an awkward conversation but a necessary one. Having an ostomy changes a patient's body image. Surgery and other treatments can cause sexual dysfunction. This can affect a patient's relationship with their current or future partner. Give your patient good information, such as UOAA's [Intimacy After Ostomy Surgery Guide](#) and allow them to ask questions and discuss their concerns. Empower them to discuss these concerns and questions with their surgeon. Other great resources include: [Intimacy with an Ostomy](#) and [Sex After Ostomy Surgery: Do's and Don'ts](#)

Education and Promotion of Self-Care

Education is important before and after surgery and is often a joint venture between the bedside nurse and the Ostomy nurse. The Ostomy nurses are not always available as soon as a need for education arises. The bedside nurse should teach the patient/family basic skills, when she/he is caring for the ostomy, and reinforce what the Ostomy nurse has taught. If you have a patient that will be getting an ostomy, please ask the physician to order a pre-op Ostomy nurse consult for teaching.

The resources on the bottom of this page have information addressing these topics.

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What People Living with Ostomies Want Nurses to Know

- Be familiar with ostomy products and terms.
- Ask the provider for an ostomy nurse consult (if there is not one) before and after surgery and any time the patient needs additional teaching or has complex or unresolved problems.
- Be their cheerleader; be positive and authentic.
- Listen to them and validate their feelings.
- Allow them to be your teacher if they have experience with their ostomy.
- Help train them when the ostomy nurse isn't there and help coordinate times with their families to be present for teaching.
- Make sure they get sent home with discharge instructions. Most hospitals have either their own handouts or patient education system.
- Everyone is unique and not all ostomies are created equal; people with an ostomy are more than the sum of their parts.

- Advice from Ostomates on patient panels and ostomy support groups.

Resources for Patients and Nurses

There are many wonderful resources for both patients and nurses. They help people connect and problem solve and have tips and tricks for living with an ostomy. Go to this link for a full list see [10 great ostomy resources for patients and nurses.](#)

- [American College of Surgeons](#)
- [Coloplast](#)
- [Convatec](#)
- [Hollister](#)
- [Ostomy 101](#)
- [Ostomy 211](#)
- [Stoma Tips](#)
- [United Ostomy Association](#)
- [Vegan Ostomy](#)