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**Will you get/stay married? Have babies?**

People with bowel and urinary diversions date, get engaged, get married, and have babies (even twins), all the time and everywhere. Your ostomy will probably seem bigger and more important to you than to anyone else, including your boyfriend, girlfriend, fiancé, partner, spouse, children or grandchildren!

**Will you easily bathe, go swimming? Bend over, participate in the exercise and sports you enjoy?**

Yes, yes, yes and yes! With a securely attached pouching system you can shower, take a bath (even a hot tub), swim, surf, camp out, climb mountains, bike, jog or play golf and tennis. People with bowel and urinary diversions are office workers, teachers, salesmen, police and firemen, carpenters, marathon runners, boxers, and airline pilots. You name it, people with an ostomy can do it. Want to live a full life? Go out and do it, forgetting that little addition to your abdomen that brings order out of a disorder that could have ruined your life ... or ended it. No one need know about your ostomy surgery unless you tell them. But perhaps if you DID tell people about yourself, then maybe there would be fewer people afraid of this life-saving surgery!

**What is the United Ostomy Associations of America or UOAA?**

The UOAA is an association of affiliated ostomy support groups throughout the United States. It is dedicated to the complete rehabilitation of all people with an ostomy and those with continent diversions. It actively advocates on behalf of all with an ostomy, helps in the formation of new groups, and provides for the exchange and dissemination of information through its website, [www.ostomy.org](http://www.ostomy.org), social media, its quarterly magazine *The Phoenix*, and its four surgery-specific *New Patient Guides*. If you wish to support the activities of UOAA, donations can be made at: [www.ostomy.org/donation.shtml](http://www.ostomy.org/donation.shtml)

*"The services provided by the local ostomy support groups affiliated with UOAA are most beneficial in helping ostomy patients accept and manage their new urinary or bowel diversion."*

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**LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP INFORMATION**



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# SO YOU HAVE - OR WILL HAVE AN OSTOMY

**Don't feel like this**



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**Yes, you've heard that people get along just fine with only one of their eyes, or one of their lungs, or one of their kidneys. But you also know that you have only one intestine and only one bladder, and that leaves you feeling awfully empty, both physically and emotionally.**

**And you think no other people go around minus part of their intestinal tracts, or minus their bladders, with the ends of their intestines sticking out through their abdominal walls.**

Well, you are wrong! There are nearly three quarters of a million people in the US who have an ostomy; people who have had surgery to remove all or part of their colons or bladders. There is even a national association, the United Ostomy Associations of America with over 350 local affiliated support groups that are organized by volunteers who provide peer support and counseling. UOAA has a toll free telephone number, 800-826-0826 and an educational, interactive website, [www.ostomy.org](http://www.ostomy.org)

**Why haven't you met any of these folks who have an ostomy?**

Well, maybe you have! You just did not recognize them because an ostomy doesn't show. It can be kept secret if you wish. Why, maybe some of your best friends, office associates or neighbors have an ostomy ... you never can tell.

**People facing ostomy surgery have many quality-of-life questions like:**

*Will you bulge? Smell? Make noises? Will you feel waste leaving your body? Will you be a captive of the toilet? Will you starve? Be a social outcast? Get/stay married? Have babies? Easily bathe, go swimming, bend over?*

OK, let's look at what you can expect:

**Will you bulge?**

Remember, without part of the intestine or bladder, and its contents, you should have a flatter tummy than before. You can expect to wear, with little exception, what you wore before surgery ... and this includes tight clothing and bathing suits.

**Will you smell?**

Today, thanks to modern odor proof pouching systems, you can walk into an ostomy support group meeting and not smell anything that is foul or offensive. And, for those with an ileostomy or colostomy who are concerned about odor when emptying their pouch, there are in-pouch deodorants that can be used to eliminate any waste odors that may exist.

**Will you make noises?**

Everyone produces gas, especially if they are an air-swallower. But intestinal sounds that occur from time to time are no different than a gurgling tummy, and quite often your clothing will muffle any sounds.

**Will you feel the waste discharges?**

For those with a colostomy or ileostomy there might be a slight pressure when waste leaves your body, but understand that the intestines have no nerve endings, so there will be no unpleasant sensations. Those with a urostomy will probably be unaware of any kidney drainage.

**Will you be a captive of the toilet?**

Immediately post-op you will spend more time in the bathroom than you will after your body recovers from surgery. Every person is different, but on average those with an ileostomy or urostomy may empty their pouches 4 to 6 times a day; a little less if you have a colostomy. The average wear time between pouch system changes is 3 to 5 days and the changing process should take less than 30 minutes.

**Will you starve?**

Not if you follow doctor's orders at each stage of your post-op adjustment. There is no such thing as an "ostomy diet". Some people with an ostomy will be able to eat and tolerate anything; others may find difficulty with some foods. Each person is an individual and must determine, by trial, what is best for them. A good practice for all is to drink plenty of water.

**Will you be a social outcast?**

Have you met anyone who has an ostomy and is a social outcast? Why should you be the first? Only your attitude and self image will effect how you are treated. No confident person is an outcast.