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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# How to Manage Skin Irritation Around Your Urostomy Stoma

This information will help you know when the skin around your urostomy stoma is irritated. It also explains how to care for irritated skin around your stoma.

## Recognizing Irritated Skin

It's normal for the skin under your wafer to be slightly pink (if you have light skin) or gray-brown (if you have dark skin) when you first take off your pouching system. This is from the pressure of your pouching system. It doesn't mean that your skin is irritated. Your skin should go back to its normal color if you leave it uncovered for about 15 to 30 minutes.

If your skin is irritated, it may:

- Look very red.
- Look different from the skin on the rest of your body.
- Feel like it's burning or itching.
- Feel painful.

## Caring for Irritated Skin

If you have irritated skin, you can follow the guidelines below. If your skin hasn't healed after following these guidelines for 1 week, contact your wound, ostomy, and continence (WOC) nurse or your doctor. They will tell you how to best care for your skin.

Many people use ostomy powders and skin prep wipes in ways that they shouldn't. **Ostomy powders and skin prep wipes don't help with all types of skin irritation.** If you don't use them correctly, they can make skin irritation worse and lead to long term skin damage. Follow the guidelines below

before using ostomy powders or skin prep wipes on your irritated skin. If you're not sure if you should be using them, ask your WOC nurse.

## **If your skin is redder (if you have light skin) or more grey-brown (if you have dark skin) than usual but you don't have any itching, burning, pain, or openings or breaks in your skin**

- Cover the irritated skin with a thin hydrocolloid sheet (dressing) or liquid skin protectant (such as MARATHON® Liquid Skin Protectant).
- Apply your pouching system over the thin hydrocolloid sheet or liquid skin protectant.
- Avoid using ostomy powder or skin prep wipes for more than a couple of days at a time. Using these things for long periods of time can make skin irritation worse.

You can buy a thin hydrocolloid sheet and liquid skin protectant at your local pharmacy or online. If you don't have a thin hydrocolloid sheet or skin protectant, you can cut an elastic barrier strip and put it over the irritated skin.

## **If your skin is itchy but looks normal and doesn't have any opening or breaks**

- Ask your WOC nurse to recommend a different wafer that has ceramides (the natural oils in your skin).
- Don't use any ostomy powders or skin prep wipes.

## **If your skin is red, weepy (wet or moist), itchy, and has openings or breaks**

- Ask your WOC nurse to recommend an antifungal treatment or steroidal treatment.
- Don't use any ostomy powders or skin prep wipes unless your WOC nurse says you should.
- Your doctor will give you a prescription for medication, if needed.
- Your doctor or WOC nurse may recommend that you see a dermatologist

(skin doctor), if needed.

## Taking a Skin Break

Many people enjoy leaving their skin uncovered for 15 to 30 minutes after taking their pouching system off. This is called a skin break. Taking a skin break can help with irritation or keep it from happening.

You can decide if you want to take a skin break. If you do take a skin break, you can hold a towel, portable urinal, or other container over your stoma to catch the urine that leaks out.

## Sending Pictures of Your Irritated Skin

It's helpful to send a picture of your irritated skin to your WOC nurse. If you have a MyMSK (MSK patient portal) account, it's best to send a picture in a message from your MyMSK account. In the message, attach the picture and write a note asking your doctor to share the picture with your WOC nurse. Your WOC nurse will call you and talk with you about different treatments for your skin.

For more information about taking a good picture of your skin, read the resource *Tips for Taking Pictures to Share with Your Healthcare Provider* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/tips\\_taking\\_pictures](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/tips_taking_pictures)).

For instructions on signing up for a MyMSK account, watch the video *How to Enroll in the Patient Portal: MyMSK* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/enroll\\_mymsk](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/enroll_mymsk)).

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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