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.

Noticing irritated skin

When you first take off your pouching system, it's normal for the skin under your wafer to be:

- Slightly pink in color (if you have lighter skin).
- Gray-brown in color (if you have darker skin).

This is from the pressure of your pouching system. It does not mean that your skin is irritated. Your skin should go back to its normal color if you leave it uncovered for 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 in this resource. Do this for 1 week. If your skin has not healed after 1 week, contact your wound, ostomy, and continence (WOC) nurse or your doctor. They will tell you how to best care for your skin.

To learn more, read the *Peristomal Skin Assessment Guide for Consumers* at https://psag.wocn.org.

Many people use ostomy powders and skin prep wipes in ways that they should not. **Ostomy powders and skin prep wipes do not help with all types of skin irritation.** If you do not use them the right way, they can make skin irritation worse and lead to long-term skin damage.

Follow these guidelines 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 gray-brown (if you have dark skin) than usual, but you do not have any itching, burning, pain, or openings or breaks in your skin

- Cover your irritated skin with a thin hydrocolloid sheet (dressing) or liquid skin protectant. An example of a liquid skin protectant is MARATHON® Liquid Skin Protectant.
- Put your pouching system over the thin hydrocolloid sheet or liquid skin protectant.
- Avoid using ostomy powder or skin prep wipes for more than a few days at a time. Using them 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 do not have them, cut an elastic barrier strip and put it over your irritated skin.

If your skin is itchy, but looks normal and does not have any openings or breaks

- Ask your WOC nurse to recommend a different wafer that has ceramides. These are the natural oils in your skin.
- Do not 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.
- Do not use any ostomy powders or skin prep wipes unless your WOC nurse says you should.
- Your doctor will give you a prescription for medicine, if needed.
- Your doctor or WOC nurse may recommend 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, hold a towel, portable urinal, or other container over your stoma. This will 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. Send the picture using your MSK MyChart

account. In the message, attach the picture and ask your doctor to share the picture with your WOC nurse. Your WOC nurse will call you and talk with you about treatments for your skin.

To learn more about taking a good picture of your skin, read *Tips for Taking Pictures to Share with Your Healthcare Provider* (www.mskcc.org/pe/tips-taking-pictures).

If you do not have an MSK MyChart account, visit mskmychart.mskcc.org or call 646-227-2593 to sign up.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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