



The Austi-Mate Journal

Ostomy Association of Austin Monthly Publication
P. O. Box 143383 Austin, Texas 78714

www.austinstomy.org

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Monthly meetings cancelled for now...
Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay home!!

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This Bi-monthly newsletter is available online at

www.austinstomy.org

The Ostomy Association of Austin is a volunteer based Non-Profit Health Support group dedicated to providing mutual aid and education, information and advocacy for persons and their families who have had or will have ostomy surgery. It is our vision to educate, empower and inspire through information and mutual support in all phases of life.



Happy New Year ~

Looking forward to healthier, safer & brighter days ahead!

Austin Ostomy Association is participating in Amplify Austin. Please mark you calendars & consider making a donation.

Our Goal: \$1000

I Live Here I Give Here

Amplify Austin

Join your community in giving back local

March 4-5, 6pm-6pm
Get involved at AmplifyATX.org

donate to the local nonprofits that address our most pressing needs.

[@iliveheregivehere](https://www.instagram.com/iliveheregivehere) [#ILiveHereIGiveHere](https://www.facebook.com/iliveheregivehere)

Have you paid your dues?

Tips for Coping in a Crisis

Excerpt from "[Tips for Coping in a Crisis](#)" in the [Hollister Incorporated Ostomy Learning Center](#)

Living through a crisis is hard for anyone, but there is an extra layer of concern for people with ostomies. Hollister sat down with two influential people in the ostomy community to find out how they cope during challenging times. Amber Wallace is the creator of the Ostomy Diaries YouTube channel and social media platforms, and Dr. Paul Wischmeyer, MD is a critical care, perioperative, and nutrition physician at Duke University School of Medicine in Durham, North Carolina. Both Amber and Paul live with an ostomy.



Two ostomy community leaders discuss effective ways to stay positive when times get tough.

Q: How can people with ostomies stay healthy both physically and emotionally when facing a crisis?

Amber: The best way to take care of your emotional health is to take care of your physical health. Continue to take your supplements. Stick to a schedule and make checklists. During a difficult time, I do the same things at the same time every day and that helps. It's also important to get enough rest and exercise, even if you have to find a routine online. Grief and anxiety can manifest physically if you don't put those things into practice.

Paul: I agree with taking the proper supplements. Some of us with ostomies absorb vitamins differently, so it's important to consult your doctor before starting a regimen. Exercise is also very important. As a senior in college, I was doing research with a doctor at Mayo Clinic. One day he said, "Paul, you're getting soft and look a little out of shape – do you want to keep getting sick? You should start running and taking better care of yourself." I had never had anyone say that before and was motivated (and a little miffed) so I started running and ran almost every day for a year. And when that same doctor performed my tenth surgery to remove my failed ileal pouch, it took only four hours instead of eight. Afterwards he said, "Your abdomen looked like you never had surgery – your adhesions were gone! Whatever you did in the last year, you should definitely keep it up!" I haven't stopped running and exercising since.

Q: What can we do to stay healthy if we have to travel during a health crisis?

Amber: It's important to keep a change of ostomy supplies on your person when traveling and make sure to stay hydrated. We all have leak stories. One time I was hiking in the Great Smoky Mountains and my pouch fell off. I had to change it in a porta potty! And, of course, I use hand sanitizer constantly, especially on my phone.

Paul: I've had leaks on planes and have had to run to the washroom with it pouring down my leg. Never a dull moment with an ostomy some days! I keep supplies in a small kit. I also always wear an ostomy belt, which helps keep my pouch secure. When my wife and I travel now we wear masks and bleach wipe everything we have to touch.

Q: Where should people turn when having a really bad day?

Amber: Stay connected with nature and focus on things that are beautiful. Take a moment and be still. Keep grounded and turn to your faith. It's OK to cry and let those emotions out. Recognize it, feel it, and embrace it. There's a myth that if you ignore depression it will go away. You have to deal with it before you can move ahead. Last year after my wedding I was feeling down and didn't know why. I was too ashamed to tell anyone. So, I decided to speak to my doctor. He ran some tests and it turned out that my vitamin levels were out of whack. Never be ashamed to talk to your doctor, that's what they're trained in.

Paul: Well, as I shared before, exercise has been a true lifesaver for me. When I'm down I also often turn to my family. Being vulnerable is hard especially when you're sick. I often have trouble loving myself with a body that could turn on me and threaten my life at any moment. Just a few years ago, I was sick again and needed three surgeries and a prolonged hospital stay (almost a month). My wife slept every night at

my bedside in the hospital. Through that I realized that perhaps I am loveable no matter what. When feeling depressed, another resource I often use is to connect to the ostomy community on Instagram and other social media. I've seen so many people get support from others all over the world. It's definitely healing to share your story...and to hear others and know you are not alone.

Q: A crisis can present problems with participating in milestone events, such as graduations and funerals. How can people still stay connected?

Amber: If it's a death, you can honor them by the way you live your life and stay positive. That's how you can keep their memory alive. If it's a graduation or birthday, plan something with the person or people when you're feeling better or the crisis is over. Connection is so important. Check-in with people, even your happy friends. You never know what they're going through. Gratefulness works too, I write down one thing I'm grateful for each day and put it in a jar.

Paul: I agree about gratefulness. In our family, we play a game every night called "3 GOOD THINGS" where we all go around and name three good things that happened each day. At our hospital, we are spending conscious time thanking people for the little things they do. Getting out of your head and thanking someone else is so essential and therapeutic. It's so important especially if you're down. Gratitude is as rewarding to yourself as it is to the one you're thanking.

Top 8 Signs Your Peristomal Skin is Irritated or Damaged

Hollister Learning Center

After your ostomy surgery, your healthcare team likely taught you how to care for your peristomal skin and what it should look like when it is healthy. Ideally, it should be intact without irritation, rash, or redness. The skin around your stoma should look just like the skin on the other side of your abdomen, or anywhere else on your body, free of redness, irritation, or damage. Healthy skin should be the rule, not the exception. However, if your peristomal skin is irritated or damaged, there may be some signs of a peristomal skin complication (PSC), such as:

1. Discomfort, itching, soreness, or even pain around the stoma
2. Recurrent leakage under your pouching system or skin barrier
3. Excessive bleeding of your stoma – it's normal for your stoma to slightly bleed after you wash it, but the bleeding should resolve quickly
4. A bulge in the skin around your stoma
5. Skin color changes from normal pink or red to pale, bluish purple, or black
6. A rash around the stoma that is red, or red with bumps – this may be due to a skin infection or sensitivity, or even leakage
7. Wart-like, pimple-like or blister-like bumps under the skin barrier – this type of irritation can happen any time, even if you've used the same product for months or years
8. Any type of wound or scratch on the peristomal skin

Peristomal Skin Complications- Potential Causes and What to Do: Irritated and damaged peristomal skin can occur for a variety of reasons. It can be caused by anything from a poor-fitting pouching system, to frequent skin barrier changes, to an allergic reaction to anything that contacts the skin, such as soaps or products used to prepare the peristomal skin. Some studies report up to 75 percent of people with an ostomy experience a PSC.* Although it is a common issue, it should not be ignored. If you experience any signs of a PSC, contact your stoma care nurse. You should work with your healthcare team to determine the exact cause and the appropriate solution.



Dementia Stoma Care

By R.S. Elvey



Caring for an ostomy can often be a frustrating and challenging experience at any age. But combine advanced age and dementia and it becomes even more of a challenge for caregivers and loved ones. According to the Population Reference Bureau, the number of Americans 65 and older will gradually increase from 15% of our population to 24% by 2050. With this growth has come a rise in existing and new ostomies combined with Alzheimer's or other dementias. The [Alzheimer's Association of America](#) reports in their 2017 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report, "Of the estimated 5.5 million Americans with Alzheimer's dementia in 2017, 5.3 million are age 65 and older." The association predicts a half a million new cases of Alzheimer's dementia will develop annually.

This explosive growth in new cases of dementia is putting an enormous strain on family caregivers. The [Family Caregiver Alliance](#) estimates, "44 million Americans age 18 and older provide unpaid assistance and support to older people and adults with disabilities who live in the community." These caregivers often have little or no preparation or support in providing care for people with disabilities such as stoma care. They become frustrated and worn out. In an online forum, an anonymous writer expressed her frustration about caring for her mother's stoma as follows, "I am TIRED of it. I need someone to take over dealing with an ostomy and ordering the correct supplies for her, etc. And I am just going to make whatever decisions seem right regarding her bladder care, as I find out more info. I really wanted to yell at her tonight and that makes me feel like a terrible, awful person. I didn't, but I did get a little firm."

Studies have shown that family caregivers who provide care to family members with chronic and disabling conditions are also putting themselves at risk of developing emotional and physical health problems. When seeking stoma care information, caregivers often participate in online chat rooms and forums for anecdotal advice. Additionally, visiting nurses with wound and ostomy training often make home visits and teach ostomy care. But when they leave the caregiver is often faced with ever-changing challenges as their loved one's dementia worsens. Most often they face the challenge of not knowing when a pouch needs to be emptied, appliances being ripped off by their loved one or attempts to empty and change the appliance that miss the mark and require massive cleanups.

Realizing the complexity of stoma care and dementia and the pressure it causes to caregivers, the Colostomy Association of the United Kingdom and the Dementia Association of the United Kingdom combined to issue a twelve-page downloadable leaflet at www.dementiauk.org entitled, "Caring for a person with a stoma and dementia". They readily recognize that not all persons with dementia will profit from learning to care for their stoma. But where it is possible a person should be encouraged to participate in their own stoma maintenance.

The leaflet's content is based on input from health professionals who care for ostomates with dementia and a stoma. A few of the hints and tips included in the publication are:

- "People with dementia who are actively involved in changing their bags should be encouraged to wear gloves. This reduces the risk of infection, feces under the nails and fecal spreading."
- "Some people with dementia who require their bag to be changed for them might resist. In these cases distraction could help. For instance, encouraging the person to clean their teeth or brush their hair during the process might be helpful. Standing the person in front of a mirror so they can focus on the task they are performing and not the bag change can help."
- "Bag choice is important. One-piece bags with pre-cut aperture have the advantage of being uncomplicated for both person and caregiver. Two-piece bags, where the flange can remain in situ for up to three days, helps protect the skin where frequent changes are necessary."

Individual and professional caregivers also provide additional advice based on their experiences. Many staff who work in nursing homes put a plastic bag over the pouch so that in case of any leakage, there won't be a much larger incident. Many persons with Alzheimer's or other dementias either pick or rip off their pouches. To prevent this from happening, many caregivers dress their loved ones in special clothing that has no openings in the front but still gives the appearance of normal clothing. One source for this type of clothing is Buck and Buck. Their online catalogue features adaptive clothing by gender and condition.

Lastly, in this smartphone age there is even an app that might help. 11 Health has created the Alfred Alert Sensor. The sensor is applied to the pouch at a point where it should be emptied. When that point is reached it connects by Bluetooth wireless technology to the Alfred Alert app on your smartphone to tell you it is time to empty. The app can also capture patient output volume over a period of time. The data is stored in a HIPAA compliant cloud server where it can be shared by medical professionals and family members. In the final analysis, caring for a loved one with dementia is a joint effort between the person with dementia, their loved ones, their medical consultants and other professional caregivers.

Editor's note: [UOAA Affiliated Support Groups](#) all around the United States are open to ostomy and continent diversion patients, caregivers, family, and friends.



Let it grow! “Green” Your Home and Breathe Easier with the Right Houseplants

Cleveland Clinic Wellness 2016



If summer's lush grass, brilliant blossoms, and swaying trees seem like a distant memory, well, they don't call this the “dead of winter” for nothing! But Mother Nature is only as far away as your local greenhouse, and adding some verdant life to your home may do more than boost your spirits. While they unfortunately won't do the dishes, certain houseplants can help clean your indoor air! Outdoor pollution conjures images of smog-soaked urban jungles, but you may not realize that indoor air can be up to 12 times more polluted than the outdoors. The culprits? Chemicals known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), often present in paint, furniture, clothing, cleaning products, and building materials.

Researchers have given high marks to English ivy plants, variegated wax plants, purple waffle plants, asparagus ferns, and purple heart plants for improving indoor air quality, not to mention Japanese royal ferns and spider plants, which may be especially good at removing formaldehyde, a VOC that's been linked to cancer. So, add some greenery to your living space, and come spring, open your windows to let in another natural detoxifier: fresh air.

Another Reason to “Just Do It!” Staying Active May Fend Off Colds.

Cleveland Clinic Wellness February, 2016

“Just do it” is a great slogan, but on cold winter days, your mind can come up with a thousand reasons to not do it. Here's a timely motivator: regular exercise may make life more enjoyable year-round by helping your body fend off colds and other viruses. Scientists have long theorized that exercise supports the immune system, and new research backs this up.

According to a study in which researchers compared sedentary animals with active ones, it boils down to inflammation, part of the body's immune response. When infection was introduced, the active animals mounted a more effective, targeted immune response than the sedentary group — and the same may be true for humans. Exercise itself creates low-level tissue damage and inflammation in the body, which may keep the body “primed” for real threats, such as viral or bacterial infections.

Physical activity also shrinks fats cells, which can be a source of harmful inflammation that reduces the responsiveness of your immune system. Before you hit the pavement, pool, or treadmill, keep the key adjectives in mind: regular and moderate. Don't fall into the “weekend warrior” habit; you don't need to train for a marathon. Aim for a brisk half-hour walk on most days of the week, and you'll be doing yourself and your immune system a big favor as your fitness level grows.



CELEBRATE!

Yearly Anniversaries

January & February 2021

Joan Wertzberger, 21; Sammie Buchanan, 16

John Duncanson, 16; James Chandler, 17

Lou O'Hanlon, 52; Bob Guidry, 38

Vernan Emken, 7

Problem-Solving Clinic **CLOSED**

The Ostomy Problem Solving Clinic remains closed for in person visits during this pandemic period.

- Many folks have reached out to Karen Hollis, RN, CWON via text and have been assisted during this time.
- Text Karen at **512-785-7448** for assistance. Send a text first and include your name. Send photos if you can as that will help in identifying the problem. Phone calls and facetime visits can be set up as needed.
- Don't suffer alone if you are having issues with your ostomy.



Are you in need of donated supplies? We have **plenty** available! Please contact Carol Laubach, (512-339-6388) and indicate what type of ostomy you have, brand preference, size, and whether it's a one or two piece. This will help to get you the best fitting supplies possible.

We are a health support group, a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), organization of volunteers whose purpose is to provide mutual aid and education to persons who have ostomies and their families. Membership fees and donations are tax deductible.



The information contained within our newsletters is for informational purposes only and may not be applicable to everyone. **Please do not follow any medical advice in our Newsletter without first checking with your physician or Wound Ostomy Continence Nurse.**

OAA Membership Application

Name _____
Ostomy Type _____ Surgery Date _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____
Year of Birth _____ Email _____
Spouse/Relative/Partner/Friend Name _____

I do ____ I do not ____ give permission for my name to be included in our newsletter or membership directory.

Signature

Date

Annual Dues:

\$25 _____ Ostomate

\$15 _____ Spouse/Relative/Partner/Friend/Other

\$25 _____ Professional

Mail Application to:

Ostomy Association of Austin

P.O. Box 143383

Austin, TX 78714

Newsletter Preference: Check one

_____ Printed version via US mail

_____ Email notification/download to your computer via website www.austinstomy.org

Membership benefits include:

- Monthly support & informational meetings
- Social events
- The Austi-Mate Bi-Monthly Newsletters



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We accept Medicare and all other Insurances like Blue Cross Blue Shield, Sterling Insurance, Pacificare, United, and Texas Medicaid, Secure Horizon and all other Private Insurances. If you have any insurance question contact us at

1-800-866-3002

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<http://www.usostomy.com>



The Phoenix magazine is the official publication of the United Ostomy Associations of America. The Phoenix magazine is published quarterly - Annual subscriptions are \$19.95.

<https://phoenixuoaa.org/>

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PM-0606C 03.19



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