



Help with pancaking

This leaflet is for patients with a stoma and explains how to avoid problems with 'pancaking' and how to manage it if it persists.

What is pancaking?

- Pancaking happens when bowel working causes a vacuum in the stoma bag and the bag sticks together. This stops the output from dropping to the bottom of the bag and can block the filter. There is then a risk that the pouch will be pushed off the abdomen and cause a leak.
- Pancaking is more common if you have a colostomy and if your stoma is flush or flat. This may be caused by weight gain, parastomal hernia or your stoma being retracted.
- We understand that pancaking can be an embarrassing and difficult problem to manage, so are here to help!



*Pancaking on back of pouch
(The Spoonie mummy 2020)*

Top tips

- **Put some air in the bag:** Ensure there is air in bag before applying it or add some air to the bag once you have applied it. This will reduce any vacuum in the bag.
- **Use a lubricant:** Insert lubricating a gel, baby oil or olive oil into the top of the pouch – avoiding the filter. This helps the output slide down into the bag.
- **Cover the filter:** If your problem seems to be because your filter is too effective, you can use the stickers that come in your box of bags to cover the filter.
- **Try a different type of pouch:** If pancaking persists and you have tried all of the tips, an alternative pouch with soft convexity may be helpful. We can look at different pouches and arrange samples for you to try.

Lifestyle tips

- **Drink more fluids:** Dehydration can be one cause of thicker output, so ensure you are drinking enough. Ostomates are advised to drink around 2.5l of fluid a day – about half a litre more than the average person. This is obviously person-dependent and some people may need more than this.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Try to eat a healthy well balance diet, including 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Increasing your fibre intake will also help to keep your output moving and aim for your bag to work at least once a day.

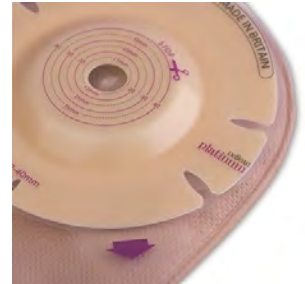
- **Laxatives:** If thick output is a regular issue for you, you may want to try a laxative or stool softener to make the output less 'sticky' and a looser consistency. This should always be done on the advice of your stoma nurse or GP.
- **Watch what you wear:** Tighter clothes such as jeans can cause an issue, size up or go for jeggings as these have a little more stretch to them but still look like jeans.
- **Squeeze it!:** Don't be scared to squash your output down your bag manually – this is especially helpful if you notice it happening due to tighter fitting clothes during the day.

Still having problems?

- **Colostomy irrigation:** If pancaking is a persistent problem and nothing has helped, then colostomy irrigation may be alternative management option and can be discussed with your stoma nurse.



*Colostomy irrigation
(Braun 2019)*



*Soft convex pouch
(Pelican 2020)*

Contacting us

Telephone the Stoma Nursing Team on: 0118 322 7640

Email: rbft.stomanurses@nhs.net Mon-Fri 8am-4pm

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Stoma Nurses, September 2026

Next review due: September 2028