



# *Ileostomy Fact Sheet*

**Ileostomy:** A surgically created opening in the abdominal wall through which digested food passes. The end of the ileum (the lowest part of the small intestine) is brought through the abdominal wall to form a stoma. An ileostomy may be performed when a disease or injured colon cannot be treated successfully with medicine.

**Reasons for surgery:** Ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, familial polyposis

## **Care of ileostomy:**

A pouching system is worn. Pouches are odor free and different manufacturers have disposable or reusable varieties to fit your lifestyle. Ostomy supplies are available at drug stores, ostomy supply houses and through the mail.

## **Living with an ileostomy:**

**Work:** With the possible exception of jobs requiring very heavy lifting, an ileostomy should not interfere with work. People with ileostomies are successful business people, teachers, carpenters, etc.

**Sex and social life:** Physically, the creation of an ileostomy usually does not affect sexual function. If there is a problem, it is almost always related to the removal of the rectum. The ileostomy itself should not interfere with normal sexual activity or pregnancy. It does not prevent one from dating, marriage or having children.

**Clothing:** Usually one is able to wear the same clothing as before surgery including swimwear.

**Sports and activities:** With a securely attached pouch one can swim, camp out, play baseball and participate in practically all types of sports. Caution is advised in heavy body contact sports. Travel is not restricted in any way. Bathing and showering may be done with or without the pouch in place.

**Diet:** Usually there are no dietary restrictions and foods can be enjoyed as before.

## **Resources available:**

Physicians and medical professionals are the first source of help. Specially trained nurses called Wound, Ostomy Continence Nurses (WOCN) are available for consultation in most major medical centers.

The United Ostomy Association (UOA) is a group comprised of many local chapters throughout the United States. These local groups hold meetings and provide support to prospective and existing ostomates. They sponsor educational events and have qualified visitors to make personal or telephone visits. Contact the UOA for the chapter nearest you and for other educational publications.

Visit the UOA web site at [www.uoa.org](http://www.uoa.org). It contains a great deal of information and many links to other sites, suppliers and resources.