



ALIVE & KICKING

How can I sleep?

Sleep makes everything better. Check out some of our tips for a more restful sleep after surgery.

At first, as your body adjusts to this new set-up, your pouch may need to be emptied during the night – maybe several times. For many ileostomates, in particular, this will become their regular routine. Over time, you may find you awaken naturally to empty your pouch. If you're afraid you'll sleep through and experience a leak or blowout, you could set an alarm to wake you every few hours – at least until your body regulates and you can establish a pattern. Many people get used to waking up a few times to empty and then fall back to sleep. Others rarely need to do this but become attuned to their pouch and can still awaken if it gets too full. You'll get the hang of it in your own time, find what works best for you, and be sleeping restfully again.

Find a Comfortable Position

For the first few weeks after surgery, your abdominal muscles and skin surrounding your stoma will be sore. You may find that lying on your back with your torso and head propped up with pillows helps alleviate any discomfort you may have when lying flat. For side sleepers, on the side of your ostomy, the mattress will probably support the pouch. On the opposite side, you might find it helpful to use a small pillow to support it. A travel neck pillow would work well. You can even sleep on your stomach. Many ostomates do. Some bend the leg on the ostomy side to create a little extra room for the bag. Bottom line: However you're comfortable is just fine. There's no harm in lying on your pouch (unless it's so full it's about to burst.)

Determine Your Ideal Evening Food and Drink Schedule

After surgery, your doctor may suggest keeping a food and drink journal to help determine the intervals at which you should empty your pouch. While this is extremely helpful during the daytime, you will also want to pay close attention to what you are consuming before bedtime and how it affects your stoma's activity. It is usually best to avoid eating or drinking 1-2 hours before bedtime. It's important to stay hydrated but avoid beverages that could cause gas (like carbonated drinks) or ones that encourage output (like coffee or grape juice, for some people.)

Accessorize and Set Yourself up for Success

Various products and accessories are available to help you find your ideal sleep solution. Extra pillows in strategic spots can provide added comfort and support. Some people find body or even pregnancy pillows assist in attaining that perfect position. Ostomy support bands or snug-fitting, stretch pajamas can also ease any anxiety you may have about your pouch flopping about while you sleep. Women may find pregnancy pajamas with wide, elastic waistbands provide added security to their appliance. Night drainage bags are made for people with high-nighttime output and may reduce the frequency at which you need to wake up to empty your pouch.

Be sure to set yourself up for success by:

- Emptying your pouch before bed (be sure to check the seal to see if it is secure).
- Keeping your room dark and clear of clutter (using a night light to guide your path to the bathroom can help, especially in the beginning).
- Avoiding using any technology near bedtime.
- Sleeping in light, comfortable clothing in a slightly cool room (Tip: wear a snug fitting shirt or tuck your pouch into your pajama bottoms).
- Instituting a relaxing bedtime ritual (light reading, soothing music or meditation.)

Sleep Meditation Short – Wind Down

<https://youtu.be/ldFD-L-Csz0>

Sleep Meditation Long – Rain Day Antiques

<https://youtu.be/9OHvPNatIBc>

Sleep Sounds – Forgotten Shapes

<https://youtu.be/tyyX4UC057c>

Sleep Meditation – Beachcomber

<https://youtu.be/soQJrB732xM>



www.embracingostomylife.org