

How do I talk with friends and family about my ostomy?

SITUATION 1:

After getting your ostomy, you decided to name your ostomy Tammy. Now that you are comfortable with Tammy, you and your sister decide to go on a trip. Your sister knows about your ostomy, but you do not know how comfortable she is talking about it with you yet. You know that you will have to talk about your ostomy at some point, especially if you need to get to a restroom quickly. This is the perfect time to use your ostomy's name. Instead of saying "My ostomy bag is getting full" you decide to say "Tammy needs to be changed."

Suggestion:

If you are not sure how to talk about your ostomy with people that may be uncomfortable, it might be a good idea to come up with a "code name" for your ostomy. Naming your ostomy or using a code phrase to tell people when you need to change your ostomy bag can be a good way to cope and talk about your ostomy with other people. Some people also just name their ostomy for fun!

Some ostomates have a code word for their ostomy. They use it with friends and family to secretly talk about their ostomy. "She would ask, 'How far along is the baby?' and so nine months was like-I have to go to the bathroom and empty this now." The person went on to say, "I think it made [my friend] more comfortable to talk about it." The ostomate even recommended that other people with ostomies should have a code word or nickname for their ostomy. Naming the ostomy can make talking about it more casual.

How do I talk with friends and family about my ostomy?

SITUATION 2:

You were invited to a Fourth of July celebration in an outdoor space. You are worried that there may not be a place to use the restroom if you need to empty your ostomy bag. You decide to tell your friend about your concern and they respond with, “It’s OK! If that happens, we’ll just hose you down with water.”

Suggestion:

Some people use humor to cope with their ostomy or to talk to people with ostomies. Talk about your ostomy the way that makes you feel good. If you are comfortable, using jokes and humor can be a great way to talk to people about your ostomy.

Or if you are not comfortable with humor, that is OK too. You can respond by saying something like, “I’m not really comfortable joking about my ostomy like that, but I am glad you will be willing to help if I need it. I really appreciate it.”

Some people worried about repeatedly asking for a bathroom when visiting friends and family. When talking to her family member about being worried she’d get a leak, her family made her laugh by saying “Ah, we’ll just hose you down.” This helped the ostomate be less worried about the possibility of a leak.