



## The challenges of living with a stoma: Peristomal body profile risk factors and leakage

As healthcare professionals, we recognise how important it is to treat patients holistically. In stoma care, a holistic approach includes managing the stoma itself as well as understanding how stomas impact people's lives. Only in this way can we provide the level of care each individual person needs.

### Identifying the key challenges

The purpose of OLS was to help us better understand the challenges people living with a stoma face every day. Previous studies have shown that leakage is a major cause of concern for people living with a stoma<sup>1</sup>. If they don't know how to manage their stoma effectively, this can also lead to anxiety and stress<sup>2</sup>.

#### In our study, we specifically asked respondents:

*How often they experienced leakage?*

26% of respondents had leakage onto their clothes within the previous month, including 9% in the previous week. 76% had experienced output under the baseplate within the previous month.

*If they had experienced changes in body shape in the area around the stoma?*

Approximately 30% of respondents had experienced a permanent change in shape in the area around the stoma or

In this article, we present the key findings from our 2019 Ostomy Life Study (OLS), where respondents shared their own experiences, challenges and worries connected with living with a stoma.

The data gathered by this study provides us with valuable insights regarding leakage and how important access to a stoma care nurse is when it comes to helping people adjust to life with a stoma and improving their quality of life.

the abdominal region over the previous two years; when split by stoma type, a greater frequency of respondents with a colostomy experienced peristomal body changes.

*If their level of activity had changed as a result of having a stoma?*

62% of respondents felt that there were physical and social activities, such as travelling, sports and visiting friends, that they wouldn't engage in because of their stoma.

*If they had consulted their healthcare professional to make sure their appliance created the best fit to their body?*

37% had never consulted their stoma care nurse to see how well their stoma product fit.

<sup>1</sup> Claessens, I., et al., *The Ostomy Life Study: the everyday challenges faced by people living with a stoma in a snapshot*. *Gastrointestinal Nursing*, 2015. 13(5): p. 18-25.

<sup>2</sup> Metcalf, C., *Stoma care: empowering patients through teaching practical skills*. *Br J Nurs*, 1999. 8(9): p. 593-600.

### Leakage is a common challenge

To make sure we were defining leakage in the same way, we showed respondents five pictures of, respectively, no leakage and various types of leakage (e.g. where the contents of the pouch leaked under the baseplate; where the contents leaked onto clothing).

The study showed that:

- People with irregular shaped stomas were more likely to experience both types of leakage.
- People with stomas level with or below the skin were more likely to experience both types of leakage.
- People with faecal stomas were more likely to experience output under the baseplate. The respondents with ileostomies had more incidences of leakage onto clothing.

### Changes in stoma shape affect confidence

30% of survey respondents had experienced a permanent change in shape during the previous two years. This group associated such changes in the peristomal area with greater odds of detecting output under the baseplate or leakage onto the clothes, which, for a large proportion of them, affected their confidence. Almost half (43%) of this group said they felt less confident that their stoma product would stay in place because their body shape had changed.

The survey also asked respondents what the area around the stoma looked like - whether this area was 'regular' or 'irregular' with creases or deep folds in the skin. Almost one-third of the respondents who had an irregular peristomal body profile reported that they experienced leakage more frequently than those with no peristomal skin issues. This highlights how important it is that we take the peristomal body profile into consideration, as that can interfere with the stoma product<sup>3</sup> and impact the patient's quality of life<sup>4,5</sup>.

### Key takeaways from the study

People living with a stoma are still concerned about leakage, both under the baseplate and onto their clothes. Survey results showed that leakage is linked to certain stoma types, peristomal body profiles and changes in the area around the stoma.

The study also showed how important it is for people living with a stoma to have access to a stoma care nurse and/or a

### The Ostomy Life Study

The Ostomy Life Study 2019 (OLS) was an online survey involving people with a stoma from 17 different countries. The survey lasted over a three-month period, from August to December 2019 and involved 5,187 respondents from 17 countries. A small portion of the respondents (19%) irrigated their colostomy, and therefore weren't asked questions about leakage.

validated assessment tool that can help them to choose the right stoma product for their body profile and stoma type. Having access to these tools and professional guidance can also help them to minimise leakage and improve their

If you wish to learn more about the challenges and implications of leakage for people living with a stoma, we recommend that you:

- Read the full article on the results of [the Ostomy Life Study 2019](#) [active link]
- Explore the [consensus-based practice guidelines on leakage](#) [active link]
- Check out [the self-assessment tools for people living with a stoma](#) [active link]



<sup>3</sup> Nybaek, H. and G.B. Jemec, *Skin problems in stoma patients*. J Eur Acad Dermatol Venereol, 2010. 24(3): p. 249-57.

<sup>4</sup> Porrett, T., et al., *Leakage and ostomy appliances: results from a large-scale, open-label study in clinical practice*. Gastrointestinal Nursing, 2011. 9: p. 19-23.

<sup>5</sup> Simmons, K.L., et al., *Adjustment to colostomy: stoma acceptance, stoma care self-efficacy and interpersonal relationships*. J Adv Nurs, 2007. 60(6): p. 627-35.