

Preventing Peristomal Hernia

What is a peristomal hernia?

A peristomal hernia occurs when a loop of bowel bulges through an opening in the muscle that was made by the surgeon for the stoma to pass through.

Peristomal hernia is one of the most common problems after stoma surgery.

How can I prevent peristomal hernia?

While all hernias are not preventable, there are a number of things you can do to lower your risk.

Before surgery:

- Maintain good eating habits. Good eating habits supports wound healing after surgery.
- Strengthen stomach muscles. Strong stomach muscles give support around the stoma and may help prevent hernia. The exercises below can help to strengthen your stomach muscles.
- Loss excess weight. Too much weight and a chronic cough from smoking add to stomach pressure which can lead to a hernia.
- Stop smoking. Smoking slows wound healing.

After surgery:

- Slowly return to an active, healthy lifestyle. Avoid straining the part around the stoma or other incisions.
- Support the part around your stoma when you cough, throw up or sneeze using your hand, a pillow or folded blanket.
- Call your doctor if you have nausea or are throwing up at home for more than 4 hours.
- Limit lifting to 5 pounds for six weeks.

- Avoid active abdominal exercises or lifting heavy objects for three months.

Lifestyle:

- Continue to keep a healthy lifestyle along with good eating habits, a healthy weight and tobacco-free life.
- Stay active: walk, bike or swim to keep up good balance and muscle strength. Think about taking a Pilates class.
- **Talk to your surgeon about when you may start abdominal exercises (see back page).**
- Avoid straining your abdominals when possible. Actions like holding your breath, bearing down and weight lifting can cause abdominal strain.
- If you have a colostomy or a urostomy, avoid constipation. Eat a healthy diet and drink lots of water.
- If you are going to take part in hard activities remember to use good body mechanics. When lifting, place your feet apart (one foot in front of the other, keep your back straight and bend your knees). Keep the object you are lifting close to your body.
- Wear a support garment, such as an **abdominal binder** or a custom-made **hernia prevention belt**, when physically active. An abdominal binder can be purchased from a medical supply company or on-line. If you want a custom belt, you may make an appointment with your ostomy nurse for evaluation.

How would I know if I have a peristomal hernia?

Most people with a peristomal hernia notice a bulge around the stoma. Other possible signs are one or more of the following symptoms:

- Abdominal pain or pressure in the area around the stoma
- Hard time passing stool (colostomy or ileostomy)

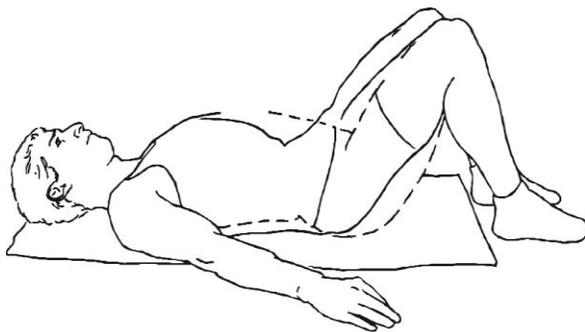
- Inability to keep a good pouch seal
- Changes in the stoma shape: if it becomes flatter or larger
- Increased skin irritation around the stoma

If you think you have a peristomal hernia, call your health care provider for evaluation. Most peristomal hernias don't require surgery but if you have any of the symptoms listed below, call your surgeon:

- Severe pain in the abdomen in the area around the stoma
- Redness, swelling or warmth in the skin around your ostomy
- Nausea or throwing up
- No output from stoma
- Changes in stoma color - if it becomes darker in color (burgundy or black)

Do these exercises to gently strengthen abdominal muscles

Start slowly with the first two exercises. Stop if you feel pain, discomfort or notice a bulge around your stoma.



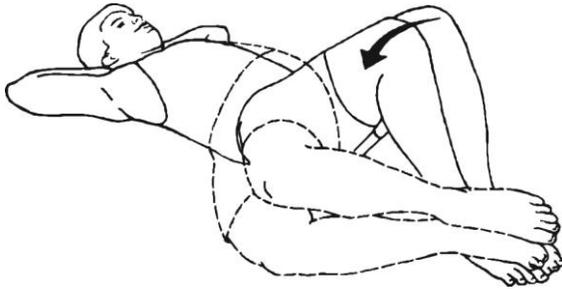
Pelvic Tilt

Pelvic Tilt Instructions:

Lie on back, legs bent. Exhale, tilting top of pelvis back, pubic bone up, to flatten lower back. Inhale, rolling pelvis opposite way, top forward, pubic bone down, arch back.

Repeat _____ times.

Do _____ sessions per day.



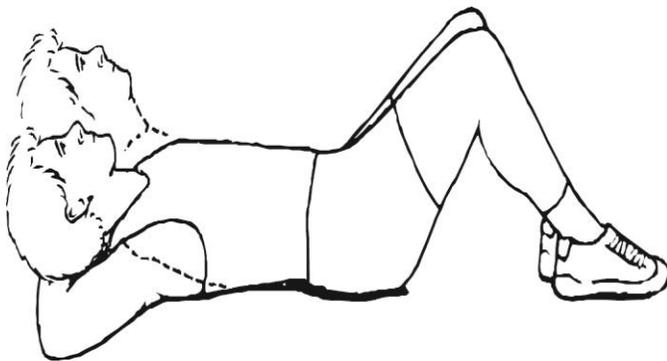
Lumbar Rotators

Lumbar Rotators Instructions:

Keeping back flat and feet together, rotate knees to one side Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat to the other side.

Repeat _____ times.

Do _____ sessions per day.



Bent Knee Crunch

Bent Knee Crunch Instructions:

Arms behind head, tighten abdominals, raise shoulders and upper back toward ceiling. Keep head and neck in line with spine. Keep low and middle back on floor.

Do _____ sets.

Complete _____ repetitions.

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