

Pancaking

with comments and tips from Tidings readers

Tidings Contributor

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There is very little literature, which states how common a problem pancaking is for the colostomist but a problem it certainly is. Pancaking (or pattycaiking as the Americans call it) occurs when the stool sits on or around the stoma and fails to drop down into the appliance. As more stool comes out there is nowhere for it to go so often it pushes its way underneath the flange. This causes problems with sore skin (where the skin is exposed to the stool), unpleasant odour and leaks. This in turn can lead to a fear of venturing out in public due to potential accidents.

Pancaking is believed to be caused either by the filter on the appliance being too effective, i.e. it lets all the gas out very quickly and leaves the bag flat against the abdomen, or because the stool is too 'sticky'. It is a tricky problem to resolve but here are a few things for you to try.

The most important thing to try over a period of time is to increase your fluid intake. If the stool is very sticky try altering your diet, particularly your fluid intake as this can often make a difference to the consistency of your stool.

'My experience with pancaking very much depends on the consistency of the stoma output which varies with my diet'

'Increasing your daily intake of water seems to be the number one home remedy for pancaking.'

Increase your fibre intake – this can also help alter the consistency of the stool.

'Really you need to keep the consistency of the faeces softer by increasing the fluid and perhaps fibre.'

Just as you apply your bag blow a little bit of air into it to prevent it from being completely flat. Towards the top of the appliance there is a filter, which allows the gas to escape. Sometimes the filter works too well and causes

the bag to suck together it is worth placing a filter cover over this (they are the little stickers that come in the box with your bags) This allows the gas to create a bit more space for the stool to move down in the bag.

'I cover the filter on the pouch with the little plaster like stickers that come in the box. By covering the filter any gas is trapped inside the pouch and usually preceding every bowel motion is a little wind, which inflates the pouch slightly allowing the motion to pass freely into the pouch (especially if it is oiled inside). This also has the dual benefit of giving you total control over odour. With the pouch filter no odour can escape and when you have wind in the pouch you can go to the bathroom, peel the plaster back a little and press the pouch to release the wind then reseal it. Make sure the plaster is left off the filter at nights to avoid ballooning.'

Another way to help the faeces pass in to the bag is to place a wet or scrunched up tissue into the appliance. This helps hold the sides of the bag open. Alternatively, Opus has a product called Clearway that is a foam cube that can be stuck inside the bag to help hold it open.

You can also grease the inside of your bag with oil (olive oil or baby oil – although this can sometimes lead to shorter wear time). This helps the stool to slide down inside the bag. Alternatively, try using a lubricating deodorant, which is now available from both Hollister and Ostomart and does the same thing.

'If it's relatively solid it can be manipulated externally to help it fall into the bag. In this case applying one of the various lubricants to your bag it can help.'

If the problem persists try taking one sachet of Fybogel a day. This is a drink with extra fibre in which can be purchased from your chemist. Always make sure you discuss this first with your stoma care nurse.

'Manipulation can help a bit but I must say I haven't found a really good solution to the problem except removing the bag (I use a two piece system) and after clearing the problem replacing it'

'A small amount of laxative helps me but this ought to be prescribed by your GP'

'I have dealt with it by lifting the plastic at the front of the bag, lower down than the stoma and then pushing down on the pancake with the plastic to get it away from the stoma. This seems to do the trick and allows further emissions to drop into the bag more easily'

You might be also be interested to learn that Oakmed has been informed on many occasions that when a colostomist has changed to an Oakmed appliance this has often resolved their pancaking problems.

A Stoma Care Department in Portsmouth has had a 100% success rate when choosing an Oakmed bag for any colostomists who are experiencing pancaking problems over the last few months. We believe that it is due to the filter and lining The filter is designed to control the slow release of gas from the bag over a period of time, rather than it all being released at once causing a space to be maintained for the free passage of faeces. Also the lining is highly polished helping the faeces to slide down away from the stoma.

References

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