

# Swimming with a stoma

Having a stoma doesn't mean you have to give up swimming - whether it's doing laps in a pool, wild swimming in the sea or relaxing in a hot tub. Read our top tips for swimming with a stoma below.

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## Can I go swimming?

Yes, it's perfectly safe and hygienic to go swimming with a stoma! You can swim just like you did before surgery; it is a great form of low-impact, full-body exercise. There's no need for a special stoma appliance - you can use the one you feel most confident in. Most modern stoma bags are waterproof.

Just be sure to wait until you are fully healed from surgery, which usually won't be any sooner than 6 weeks post-surgery.



## How should I prepare for swimming?

- Apply your pouch an hour before swimming so the adhesive has time to fully stick to your skin.
- Use filter covers (the little stickers) that come with your pouching system to stop water blocking the filter.
- Eat well in advance of your swim. You may wish to avoid foods that typically cause you to have issues like high output or ballooning.
- Empty your drainable or urostomy pouch before you get in the water.
- Keep supplies nearby in a small waterproof or easy-to-carry bag in case you need to change quickly.
- You may want to boost your confidence by using products to help improve the adhesion of your bag, such as a barrier film like StoCare Protect or flange extenders like StoCare Extend.
- Ensure your peristomal skin is completely dry before applying a new bag.
- If it doesn't need changing, you can dry off the pouch (a hand dryer or hair dryer can help!) and continue wearing it.

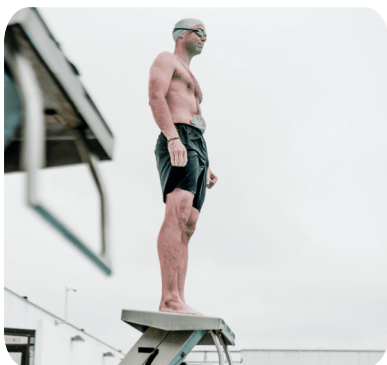
## **What should I wear?**

There are no rules over what you should wear while swimming with a stoma; choose whatever makes you feel comfortable and confident. Some people are happy in bikinis or briefs, while others prefer something more covered like high-waisted bottoms, swimsuits, wetsuits or tankinis. You can buy specialist stoma swimwear from some online shops.



It might be worth testing your outfit in the bath or shower at home first. This will hopefully reassure you that it will hold in place, not leak and look and feel fine when wet.

**Tip:** Patterned swimwear helps disguise the outline of a stoma bag better than plain colour.



## **What about water sports?**

If you enjoy water sports like paddleboarding, surfing, or kayaking, there's no reason that your stoma should stop you. All the above advice still applies, but you might also consider a stoma belt or protector. These may help to reduce the risk of a parastomal hernia if you will be engaging your abdominal muscles. Also, you don't have to avoid diving or jumping in water.

As long as your stoma bag is secured and feels snug to your abdomen, water activities are perfectly safe, but you may wish to check with your stoma nurse to be sure.

## **Conclusion**

Swimming with a stoma can feel daunting at first, so start slowly to build your confidence. If you are feeling insecure, try to remember that everyone else is focused on their own swim. Chances are, no one will notice (or care about) your stoma bag. With a bit of preparation and the right mindset, you'll be back in the water in no time.

