

Making decisions together

Supporting conversations about bladder and bowel products and services



A guide for people needing to use a medical product to manage their bladder and/or bowel condition.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This is a resource to help you understand your rights, prepare for appointments and have confident conversations with your healthcare professionals about the management of your bladder or bowel condition.

Examples of a medical product (device) includes stoma bags, sheaths, leg bags, pads, catheters or bowel irrigation system.

Do you know what your rights are?

There is a [NHS Constitution](#) that states you have the right to:

- **Be involved in decisions about your treatment**
- **Access products that meet your clinical needs**
- **Choose your supplier or delivery provider**
- **Make a complaint if you're unhappy with your care**

What do these rights mean to you?

Be involved in decisions about your treatment – This means you are informed and aware of the management options and understand the potential outcomes.

- Active participation in the consultation will clearly inform your healthcare professional of your preferences but also ensure it aligns with your health and lifestyle goals.
- Discussing this will help express any preferences and values you have which could influence the decisions made between you and your healthcare professional.

Access products that meet your clinical needs - You have the right to receive the medical products (e.g. devices) appropriate for your specific health condition and clinical requirements.

- Following an assessment with your specialist nurse, you should be fully informed of all the products available which meet your specific clinical need.
- Being aware and having a choice of which products are suitable to you, is an essential part of finding the product most effective for the management of your bowel/bladder routine.
- Once your product/products have been chosen, a prescription is required from a GP or prescribing nurse.

Choose your supplier or delivery provider - Once you have this prescription, you then select the supplier or provider to get your medical products or services.

- This may be a Specialist Medical supplier known as a DAC (Dispensing Appliance Contractor) or
- You may wish to use your local pharmacy. Please see this link for further information [Dispensing appliance contractors - NHS](#).
- Your choice can be based on factors such as service quality, convenience, and reliability allowing you to choose which solution best fits your lifestyle and preferences.
- Ask your specialist nurse for further information. Please also see this NHS leaflet "[Your Prescription Your Choice](#)"

Make a complaint if you're unhappy with your care – This right allows you to express any dissatisfaction regarding your care/service delivery. An effective complaint process is crucial for identifying areas for improvement in healthcare systems and ensuring concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately.

Coloplast have worked with patients to develop a number of letters that can help you self advocate for the care that works for you, and more information about your rights and how to complain. Further information can be found here:

[Coloplast - Patient Choice](#)

The following information is a guide to help you ask the right questions so you can feel fully informed in the choice of products and services available and feel confident the ones you are using are the best for you.

BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

Write down the things you would like to ask and take this to the appointment with you

Even a few key questions can help you get the most from your appointment. Having to use a product to manage your bowel/bladder condition is often overwhelming, and takes time to get into a routine.

You may have feelings of anxiety or concerns about how you are going to cope with everything, especially when carrying out activities, such as going to work, meeting people outside of the home, going on holiday. This is perfectly normal and understandable.

What is important is that you express these feelings. Talking to a healthcare professional can really help with not only ensure you have all the information to understand your situation, but also finding how the right products will enable you to manage your routine better.

Examples include:

- Please can you talk me through the reason why I need this product?
- I'm struggling to manage my routine – do you have any advice for me? (e.g. finding it difficult to remember what I need to do or when to use it; or I am feeling overwhelmed with everything)
- I am having difficulty using the product, is there a different product I can try? (e.g. it is really fiddly, I can't see what I am doing)
- Have you any advice for me as I am still having issues with my bowel/bladder (e.g. leakage; soreness) which is making me constantly worry I am doing something wrong?
- Can I try different products before making a choice, can I change my mind?
- Do I get an annual check-up to make sure everything is ok?

If you have already been using a product – please take the current products to show your healthcare professional.

DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT

Here are some things to think about to make sure you get the most out of your appointment.

Ask for clear explanations

- It is important to understand what your healthcare professional is saying about your management options. It's okay to ask them to explain it again or in a different way.
- It may help to write down the answers to your questions as this will help you to remember what was said.

Discuss product choices

- In the majority of situations, there will be different makes of products suitable for your clinical need, ask to see them, or if the assessment / prescribing nurse does not have them available, request where you can find additional information or samples to try.

- If you are told you can't have a particular product, ask why. This could be because of a prescribing restriction where you live.
- If this is the case and you have found a particular product works better for you; be confident in explaining this with your health care professional.
- Request a follow up appointment with your healthcare professional to review how you are finding your routine with your product.

Prepare for questions your healthcare professional may ask

Your healthcare professional may ask about your daily routine, any issues or recent changes in your health. These questions are to help them understand what is normal for you

Examples include:

- How often are you using your product? Are you physically able to manage or do you have any dexterity or visual impairments that are impacting your routine?
- Do you feel this is product related or you struggle with your routine?
- Have you noticed any changes in your bowel or bladder function? (e.g. increases/decreases/ colour)
- Have you had any other medical changes recently? (e.g. illness, new medication, new treatment)

Consider bringing someone with you

It can be hard to remember everything that is said during an appointment. A friend, family member or carer can help you to remember what was said and ask questions you might forget in the moment.

FURTHER SUPPORT

You don't need to manage everything on your own. If you are struggling, feeling overwhelmed, or have concerns, there is help available:

- Contact your GP or other healthcare professional
- Reach out to charities and patient support organisations (see below)
- Ask about peer support groups or online communities

Useful contacts	
The Patients Association	www.patients-association.org.uk
Coloplast	www.coloplast.co.uk
Bladder and Bowel Community	www.bladderandbowel.org
Colostomy UK	www.colostomyuk.org
Ileostomy Association	www.iasupport.org
Urostomy Association	www.urostomyassociation.org.uk
Crohns and Colitis UK	www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk
MS Trust	www.mstrust.org.uk
The Urology Foundation	www.theurologyfoundation.org
Mind	www.mind.org.uk

Remember

- You are the expert on your body – your observations and concerns matter.
- Healthcare professionals are there to support you. It's ok to ask questions, request a second opinion or ask for more time.
- You have the right to understand and be involved in decisions about your care.

This guide was developed by the Patients Association in partnership with Coloplast, and co-created with people living with bladder and bowel conditions.

References

NHS Constitution: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/the-nhs-constitution-for-england#patients-and-the-public-your-rights-and-the-nhs-pledges-to-you>

Dispensing Appliance Contractor - Patient Choice Delivery:

<https://patientchoicedelivery.co.uk/dispensing-appliance-contractor/>

Your Prescription Your Choice:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2015/09/poster-combatting-prescription-disp-docs.pdf>

Coloplast - Patient Choice: <https://www.coloplast.co.uk/about-us/landing-pages/patient-choice/>

CONTACT

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