

Having surgery to close a temporary ileostomy (day case)

General Surgery

Information for Patients

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Introduction

If you have a temporary ileostomy, doctors will plan to close it later with another surgery. This surgery will reconnect your small intestine so that waste can pass through your bottom again, just like before.

The surgery usually takes about 1 hour.

You might go home the same day or the next day.

You will need a few weeks to get better at home. Most people can go back to their normal activities after that.

The best part? You will not need a stoma bag anymore. You will go to the bathroom like before.

It may take some time for your bowel to feel normal again.

What is an ileostomy?

An ileostomy is a temporary way for your body to get rid of waste after surgery. The doctor makes a small opening on your belly. Waste goes into a special bag you wear on your tummy (stoma bag). This helps your large intestine heal after surgery.

Once you are healed, you can have another surgery (ileostomy reversal or closure) to close the ileostomy and get back to normal.

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Ileostomy closure

Ileostomy closure is a surgery that removes your ileostomy. It lets you say goodbye to your stoma bag. During this surgery, the doctor reconnects the ends of your small intestine that were separated to create the stoma. This lets the waste pass through your bottom again just like it did before your first surgery. It is like undoing the detour made by your ileostomy. Your bowel movement can get back to normal

Ileostomy closure as a day case

The good news is that ileostomy closure surgery can sometimes be done as a day case! You have the surgery in the morning, rest at the hospital for a few hours, and then go home the same day.

What does being a day case mean?

Faster recovery at home: Instead of staying in the hospital for a few nights, you get to recover in the comfort of your own home much sooner.

Close monitoring with a virtual ward: Even though you go home the same day, the hospital will still check on your recovery. They might use a "virtual ward" system. Healthcare staff check you remotely or arrange follow-up visits to make sure you are healing well.

Suitable for certain patients: Not everyone can have day case surgery. Your doctor will look at your situation. They will decide if this option is safe and right for you.

Anesthesia during your surgery

You will have a general anesthesia to help you sleep through the whole procedure. This means you will not feel anything during the surgery.

The doctors use special medicines that work quickly. They do not stay in your body for long. These medicines help you wake up faster. You can go home the same day or the next day after your surgery.

The team will carefully watch over you to make sure everything goes well, so you can rest at home and start feeling better.

Virtual ward support

Even though you get to go home after surgery, you will not be alone in your recovery! A virtual ward system lets healthcare staff keep an eye on you from a distance. You might use apps on your smart phone/device or wearable devices. These will form part of the kit to check your heart rate and blood pressure and track how you are doing.

You may use a text message app called AccuRx to stay in touch with the team.

They will make a plan just for you. They will explain everything before you leave the hospital.

You can focus on getting better in the comfort of your own home, knowing that help is just a message away.

Possible complications after surgery

While most surgeries go smoothly, there is always a small chance of complications.

Below are some general and specific complications you should know about:

General complications:

- **Chest Infection (pneumonia):** This can happen after surgery because you might not be as active.
- **Urinary tract infection (UTI):** A UTI can occur if a catheter is used during surgery.
- **Blood clots:** Blood clots can form in your legs (DVT) or move to your lungs (PE) after surgery.
- **Heart issues:** Surgery and anesthesia can sometimes cause temporary heart rhythm problems.
- **Bleeding:** There might be bleeding from the surgery site. In some cases, a blood transfusion may be needed.
- **Organ/tissue/nerve injury:** There's a small chance that nearby organs, tissues, or nerves could be injured during surgery.
- **Wound infection:** The area where the cut was made might get infected.

Complications specific to bowel surgery:

- **Slow bowel function (Ileus):** It is normal for your bowels to take a few days to start working again after surgery. Passing gas is a good sign. If you are worried about bloating or not passing gas, contact the virtual ward. Treatment might include resting your bowels (not eating or drinking) and getting fluids through an IV or a tube to drain your stomach.
- **Wound infection at stoma site:** This can usually be treated with antibiotics and proper wound care.
- **Bowel blockage (obstruction):** In some cases, the small intestine can become blocked. This means waste cannot pass through normally. Rarely, you may need more surgery.
- **Leak from the rejoined bowel (anastomotic leak):** There's a small chance of a leak where your intestine was reconnected. This can lead to infection. You might need more surgery and to stay in hospital.
- **Stoma site hernia:** A hernia might develop at the spot where your stoma used to be.

What to expect after your bowels start working

After your ileostomy closure, it will take some time for your bowels to get back to their usual pattern. How long this takes can depend on how much bowel was removed during your first surgery. It will

also depend on any treatments you had, like radiotherapy or chemotherapy. Here's what to expect:

- **Bowel function takes time:** It is normal for your bowel movements to be a bit unpredictable for a few weeks after surgery. Be patient as things settle down.
- **Common symptoms:** You might
 - have loose poo
 - need to go to the bathroom more often
 - feel an urgent need to go (sometimes with a little leakage or spotting)
 - have trouble telling gas from poo
 - have sore skin around your bottom
 - feel like your bowels are not completely emptying.
- **Symptoms improve over time:** The good news is that these symptoms should get better. They should slowly improve within the first year after your surgery.

Taking care of your wound

- You will have a small wound where your stoma used to be.
- We close the wound with dissolvable stitches or staples.
- The hospital will give you clean dressings to use at home.
- The nurses on discharge will show you how to change your dressings. You should change the dressing every day.
- When the wound has healed over, you can leave the dressing off.
- The hospital will tell you if your stitches or staples need removing. A practice nurse at your GP surgery can help with this during a scheduled appointment.

Recovery timeline

Recovery after ileostomy closure surgery is usually quite quick. You might feel weak and tired at first because of the anaesthesia and surgery, but it is important to give yourself time to heal.

Here's a general idea of what to expect:

Gentle exercise: Walking is a good way to help you recover.

Driving: You can start driving again when you can make a sudden stop without pain. This might take up to 6 weeks. Be sure to contact your insurance company before you start driving again.

Returning to work: How soon you can go back to work depends on your job. Office workers often return within 3 weeks, while jobs that are physically demanding might need 4 to 6 weeks of rest.

Lifting restrictions: You can begin lifting light objects (less than 10lbs) after you leave the hospital. Slowly increase the weight over time, but stop lifting if you feel any pain or discomfort.

Follow-up care:

If you have any problems with your recovery, please contact the team through the virtual ward or the consultant's secretary.

- Feeling or being sick all the time (persistent nausea or vomiting)
- Bleeding from your bottom
- Fever higher than 37.5°C (101.5°F)
- Pus or more redness around the wound
- Pain that gets worse
- Diarrhoea that lasts more than 5 days
- Feeling unwell without getting better

If you ever feel seriously unwell, call an ambulance or dial 111.

Contact details:

If you have any questions please contact your stoma nurse or the virtual ward team on:

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Previous reference:

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