Preventing Dehydration
After Your Ileostomy
Patient Education

What Is an Ileostomy?
The surgery you are having is called an ileostomy. It will leave an opening (stoma) in your belly. The opening allows waste to move out of your body when the colon or rectum is not working properly. Your health care team will teach you how to take care of yourself after the surgery.

What Is Dehydration?
Dehydration happens when your body loses more fluid than you take in. When this happens, your body doesn’t have enough water and other liquids to carry out its normal functions. Dehydration can be a problem when you have an ileostomy.

Normally, the large intestine absorbs water back into your body as solid waste goes through. Your ileostomy keeps food and liquid from entering the large intestine, so water cannot return to your body. You are more likely to become dehydrated. Be extra careful to drink enough liquids.

Here are some signs of dehydration:
• Dry mouth or tongue
• Dark-colored urine
• Less frequent urination
• Weakness or dizziness when you stand
• Cramps in the belly and legs
• Mental confusion

Call your surgeon right away if you have any signs of dehydration.

Why Is It Important to Avoid Dehydration?
• If your body does not get enough liquid, you might have to go to the emergency room or back to the hospital. You might need more surgery or have permanent health problems.
• One of every five new ileostomy patients is readmitted to the hospital for dehydration. The hospital stay for dehydration is usually longer than for the surgery itself.

You Can Help Prevent Dehydration
• Drink 8 to 10 eight-ounce glasses of liquids daily. Be sure to include drinks such as Gatorade or Powerade, especially during hot weather.
• Monitor how much fluid you take in (intake) and how much waste you put out (output). While you are in the hospital after your surgery, the nurse will teach you how to track your urine and ileostomy output.
• Record your intake and output on the tracking sheets. Show them to your home health nurse. Bring the sheets to your follow-up appointments with the ostomy nurse and surgeon.
If You Have Questions

• Please contact your home health care nurse first.
• Huntsman Cancer Institute/University of Utah Health Care ostomy nurses are available Monday through Friday at 801-585-2766. Leave a message and we will return your call the next business day.
• For concerns that need immediate attention, call the hospital at 801-581-2121 and ask for the general surgery resident on call.

When to Call Your Surgeon’s Office

• Call right away if you have any signs of dehydration (see list on previous page).
• Call if stool output is ever less than 16 oz. or more than 40 oz. in 24 hours.
• Call if you urinate fewer than three times in 24 hours. If you urinate fewer than five times in 24 hours, drink more liquids.
• Call if your urine becomes darker yellow in color or cloudy, or if it has a strong odor.

View These Helpful Videos

Living with an Ileostomy
Six-part series featuring Courtney Scaife, MD
http://goo.gl/lrQZ9C

Colostomy/Ileostomy
Eight-part Video Series
American College of Surgeons
http://goo.gl/VeK3Lg