

Portland Maine
Ostomy Support Group
Newsletter

The Visitor

November-December 2007

Next Portland Meeting:
Sunday, November 18, 2:00 p.m.
Mercy Hospital Auditorium

We meet on the third Sunday in
 March, May, July, September, & November
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**As always, our thanks to the
 American Cancer Society for
 distributing this newsletter.**

Our Chapter Website: www.uoaportland.com

From the Editor – Peter McGinn

A couple weeks ago I thought there was as much chance of me getting this newsletter out as there was of the Red Sox winning more than one World Series per decade. The hard drive on our computer crashed, taking with it past issues of this newsletter and more. Plus I hadn't written the next chapter of The Back Page. But here I am. The next chapter of The Back Page practically wrote itself.

So if you have been receiving this newsletter by e-mail, or would like to receive it by e-mail, send your e-mail address to narrator@maine.rr.com. I will build up my e-mailing list again (and make a copy of it this time). And if I make it to the next meeting, maybe I will see you there.

Great Truths About Growing Old

From 10/07 UOAA Update

- Growing old is mandatory; growing up us optional.
- Forget the health food. I need all the preservatives I can get.
- When you fall down, you wonder what else you can do while you're down there.
- You're getting old when you get the same sensation from a rocking chair that you once got from a roller coaster.
- It's frustrating when you know all the answers but nobody bothers to ask you the questions.
- Time may be a great healer, but it's a lousy beautician.
- Wisdom comes with age, but sometimes age comes alone.

Urinary Diversions

By Norma N. Gill, ET

In the urinary diversion, we note certain things that are traumatic to the patient. However, contrary to what most people think, urine on the skin does not cause a skin irritation except when it is trapped under the skin barrier.

Foolproof equipment is necessary to have; i.e., there must be no leakage. Yeast conditions are common; therefore, it is advisable to have a micro-granulated anti-fungal powder on hand whenever you see a reddened area. The removal of the adhesive disc—the skin barrier—again should be done gently pulling on the skin and not the barrier. This prevents one pulling off the cornified layers of skin. One can pull out the hair follicles by the roots, which leaves the area wet and weepy if proper care is not taken.

Hair should be removed by either cutting with scissors or an electric razor. Extra care should be used when using a regular razor. It will shave off the roots of the hair. If one does have small weepy areas, a quality ostomy powder should cover them.

One must be re-measured after surgery for the right opening in the barrier, and if he/she is not, we will see a crusty wart like looking skin, often bleeding and oh so tender. Then someone will cut a larger size opening to accommodate this. Wrong! It should be a smaller size to press down the "dishpan hands" skin. This is where skin has been exposed to urine so that it becomes water logged. In some cases, one may have to go to surgery—for it is so tender—and have it shaved off to the skin level.

Then immediately, one must re-measure an exact sized barrier and check continually to make sure it is correct. Crystals are usually on the stoma, not on the skin. However, use of full strength vinegar in the pouch, sloshed over the stoma once or twice a day will prevent this. Crystals show up as white deposits on the stoma. Again, let me stress for the urinary stoma—cements, pastes and adhesives cause problems. One must have a correct fitting barrier with proper adhesion.

However, skin problems are not as bad as those of the person with an ileostomy are. If one finds a reaction, use one of the high quality skin barriers around the stoma, which will prevent this and provide a better seal.

What to Drink with Drugs

From the UOAA

How many times have you received a prescription with the instruction to "take as needed" or "take before meals?" Pretty vague, but many people do not stop to question further, assuming the medication will work, no matter with what they swallow it.

Acidic drinks, such as fruit juice or soda pop, may chemically destroy certain kinds of antibiotics, including penicillin, ampicillin, or erythromycin. Citrus fruit juices may reduce the effect of antidepressants, antihistamines or major tranquilizers by speeding their urinary excretion.

Milk can interfere with a number of medicines. The laxative Ducolax, for example, has a coating designed to ensure that the drug will dissolve slowly within the intestine. But if the medication is taken with milk, which is alkaline, it may dissolve prematurely within the stomach, lose its cathartic action and irritate the sensitive stomach lining. Milk can also block the action of tetracycline. If a doctor fails to warn his patient not to take this antibiotic within an hour of any dairy product, he might be puzzled to hear the infection he was treating has not disappeared.

Even something as simple as tea, hot or cold, may cause problems. A woman given a mineral supplement to treat iron-deficiency anemia would probably be surprised to learn that the tannin in tea can undo the benefits of her iron pills.

To play it safe, you can always rely on GOOD OLD WATER!! Water will not interact with drugs or reduce their effectiveness.

Doctors Do the Prescribing, But It's Up to You to Take Charge of the Details From the UOAA

- * **Be curious** – know what your condition is and how the drug will help you.
- * **Don't play doctor** – never tinker with the dosage on your own.
- * **Share your life story** – the doctor needs a complete picture of your health and habits.
- * **Make friends with your pharmacist** – you can never get too much information.
- * **Plan a review session every 6 months** – one in five Americans over 65 takes at least one inappropriate prescription drug.
- * **One size doesn't fit all** – the amount of medicine you may need may vary with age, weight, gender and ethnicity.
- * **Send old drugs packing** – review your medicines at least once a year and get rid of oldies that are no longer goodies.
- * **Timing is everything** – some side effects can be avoided by adjusting the timing—but ask your doctor before changing.
- * **Be aware of interactions** – Drug-Herb, Drug-Drug, Drug-Condition, or Drug-Food interactions are all potential problems.

Ten Questions to Ask Your Doctor or Pharmacist About a New Prescription – From the UOAA

Prescription drugs are life-savers—but only if they're used correctly. In the U.S., nearly half of all medications aren't taken as directed. Fourteen percent of prescriptions never get filled; 13 percent are filled but never used; 29 percent are filled but not finished.

- What's the name of the drug you're prescribing

- Is a less expensive generic version of this drug available?
- How much will I be taking and how many times a day?
- What time of day is best to take the medication? Should it be taken with food or without?
- Does the medication need refrigeration?
- What side effects, if any, might I experience? What should I do if they occur?
- Is it safe to take this drug with other drugs or supplements? Can I drink alcohol while I am on this medication?

Tips For Traveling with Medications From the UOAA

KEEP your medicine with you—not in checked luggage.

BRING more than enough medicine for your trip.

REVIEW your dosage schedule with your doctor or pharmacist before you leave and discuss whether you should make allowances for changes in time zones.

KEEP a list of all your medicines and dietary supplements.



The Back Page-

Fiction by Peter McGinn

Previous chapters of this masterpiece can be found on the UOAPortland.com website.

Chapter 13 – Helping the Maestro

When I left, Mom gave me a wink and the Maestro shook my hand and raised his eyebrows in a conspiratorial fashion. Weird. Katt took my hand in hers as we strolled down the walkway to Dad's car, so I instantly forgave both Mom and the Maestro for being so weird.

"How did it go?" Katt asked me. I gave her my best blank look. "Come on," she said. "Your man-to-man talk with the Maestro. Still, I've met both of you, so I think you were a couple of men short. Did he lower his guard and admit to having an affair?"

I opened the passenger side door to let her in. She let go of my hand and placed both hands on my shoulders to get up on her tiptoes and kiss me. I'm not that much taller than she, so I glanced down and saw she was barefoot and carrying her shoes. "No, he didn't admit to that," I said as she got in. "It's better than that." I closed the door and walked around the back of the car. By the time I got in, she was sitting far enough over to practically be in my lap.

"Tell me."

"He asked me to help him with a woman who has been bugging him."

"Yeah, right. For no reason at all she is harassing him, poor soul."

"Well, he is in the public eye." I held up my hands. "He is not my favorite person. I'm just being open-minded."

"And I adore you for it," she said ironically as I started the car and pulled out into the roadway. "What does he want you to do about it? Or, knowing your recent history, who does he want you to pretend to be?"

"Someone who cares, I guess. He wrote down the lady's name and

number and stuck the paper into my shirt pocket. And there it sits."

"Not any more," she said, and plucked it out of my pocket. She unfolded it and starts to laugh almost immediately.

"Nothing about my life is that funny," I commented, and then a thought occurred to me. "It isn't my mother's name, is it?"

She finally stops laughing. "No, but you should recognize the number. Pull over; we don't want an accident."

Her saying that reminded me of the other type of accident I think about a lot: with the ostomy pouch. Funny how the surgery seemed to have brought a new vocabulary into my life. I pulled over. She handed me the paper. My father's phone number was there just below Michelle's name. "I don't get it."

"Clearly," she agreed.

"No, I mean, if it was Michelle calling and talking to the Maestro, why didn't Mom recognize Dad's phone number?"

"Oh my God, it's cute when you try to be logical. But that one is easy. She assumed he has been erasing the mystery woman's number from the caller ID list. More proof of his guilt." She giggles.

"You're enjoying this way too much," I informed her.

"I think I am. I'm going to be able to give up watching television," she announced. "I'm going to get all the entertainment I need from your life." She placed a hand on my shoulder and kissed my cheek out of appreciation for the money she would save on her cable bill. It was a measure of how I felt about her that my thought at this moment was not, "Why the heck was Michelle calling the Maestro?" Instead I thought, "Cool, Katt can't seem to keep her hands off me."

Next time: Michelle's Threat