

*Portland Maine Ostomy  
Support Group  
Newsletter*

***The Visitor***

July -August 2007

**Next Portland Meeting:  
Sunday, July 29  
Two Lights State Park  
Cape Elizabeth  
Grove #2  
Reserved from 12 to 5**

**(This is not a covered area, so if it is  
raining that day,  
stay home and stay dry!**

We meet on the third Sunday in  
March, May, July, September, & November  
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**The Seacoast Ostomy Meetings  
have been Discontinued**

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We thank the American Cancer Society  
for distributing this newsletter.



Our Chapter Website: [www.uoaportland.com](http://www.uoaportland.com)

From the Editor – Peter McGinn

At the May meeting we heard about the new moldable flanges from Convatec. We had a good turnout and our thanks go to Chris Hayes for taking time out of her Sunday to show us what Convatec has to offer. We were able to test how to use the moldable flanges, ask questions, and order samples.

For the July meeting we are having a social gathering, for those who are interested. I realized I had to pick a day when I was available, so it will be on Sunday, July 29. I have reserved Grove #2 at Two Lights State Park in Cape Elizabeth. I told them we would need it from 12 to 5, but you can arrive earlier or stay later if you want, or just for a couple of hours for that matter.

The entrance fee is \$3 for adults, \$1 for kids under 5, and free for those over 64 years old. I was also told that the sign pointing to grove #2 is visible from the parking lot. (You can also ask at the gate.) I reserved it under Ostomy Support and my name. There is a paved path down to it. There should be picnic tables, grills and a nice view.

We will bring charcoal for the grills and some meat to grill. Note that our area is not covered, so if it is raining you might want to stay home and stay dry. (If the weather is bad that day, I would be open to meeting for coffee somewhere, say, at Tim Hortons on

Main St. in Westbrook at 2:00, but let's burn that bridge when we get to it.)

### **Urology Concerns**

*From Evansville Reroute Newsletter*

Germs are all over the world, but when they are in the urinary tract, either in the conduit, the ureters (tubes), or the kidneys, they are in an abnormal location, and that is what causes an infection. Mostly, the reasons are unexplainable. Why do some people get more colds than others?

Infections can be caused by obstructions, kidney stones, tumors, cysts, or scar tissues. Almost synonymous with obstruction is infection, and then too often comes stone formation. Once you have stone formation, it's hard to get rid of the infection. It is a cycle that goes round and round. Infection can be caused by urine being forced back to the kidneys through the conduit. This could happen if you fall asleep with the appliance full of urine and accidentally roll over on the pouch, causing urine to be forced back through the stoma and the urinary tract with tremendous pressure. Invariably, the urine in the appliance is contaminated.

In general, to prevent and treat the infection, you need a good flow of urine, much like a stream. That not only dilutes the bacteria or germs in the urine but also helps wash them out. Two and one-half quarts of liquids daily are required for the average adult. Night drainage is a MUST. Otherwise, you run the risk of urine backing up into the kidneys, which can cause irritation or infection. This is especially important for urostomates with only one kidney.

It's important to be aware of the symptoms of a kidney infection: elevated temperature, chills, low back pain, cloudy urine, or decreased urine output. People with ileal conduits normally produce mucus threads in

their urine, which give a cloudy appearance, but bloody urine is a danger sign. You must see your doctor if any of these symptoms occur.

### **Helpful Hints**

*As always, you may want to check with your doctor or ET nurse before trying something new.*

- Scraps and cutouts from barriers are great to relieve pressure of blisters or corns on one's feet. Keep them in a small jar with a tight lid and the paper backing left on until you are ready to use them.
- If you still have your rectum and have pain or a full feeling, you may have a collection of mucous which should be washed out. Check with your doctor regarding this.
- Bring your problems and questions to chapter meetings; don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask questions.
- If you are beginning new medication—for any reason – keep a close eye on your stoma discharge. Contact your doctor if you suspect the medicine is going in and straight out.
- Discard expired medications to prevent any potential adverse affects. Aspirin can be toxic to the kidneys just two or three months after expiration. The same is true for tetracycline. Many drugs just lose their effectiveness.
- Lack of bulk in a colostomate's diet can be part of the difficulty in elimination. This may be caused by eating too much refined food and not enough bulk.
- If your pouch doesn't stick well, are you applying it right after showering in a high-humidity bathroom? Skin must be perfectly dry to receive and hold the appliance. Also oily products such as vitamin E and Dove Soap, can cause the wafer to loosen and

fall off.

## Page 2

- Laughing is healthy for your body as well as your mind. When you laugh, you exercise your heart, lungs and adrenal glands. You also breathe more deeply, increasing the body's oxygen flow. Laughter may ease physical pain by triggering production of endorphins—nature's pain killers.
- Ileostomates should not sit in one position for a lengthy period of time. That may force pouch contents upward around the stoma and cause possible leakage. Stand up frequently.

### Support Groups Help the Recovery Process

*Evansville Reroute Newsletter*

While this article deals primarily with cancer support groups, the same principles apply to other support groups for various conditions.

Years ago, support groups for people diagnosed with cancer or other conditions were often frowned upon or dismissed as "touchy-feely." Many believed that talking about their feelings or asking for help were signs of weakness. Some even feared that meeting others with similar problems would fuel depression and self-pity.

Times have changed, however, and so have theories about the value of talk. Today more and more hospitals are offering emotional support via groups and one-on-one counseling as part of the standard treatment for rehabilitation.

Some research suggests that support may even increase longevity. It makes sense that emotional support from a caring circle of close friends or family would buffer the stress suffered. But many patients say they lack open communication within their families. Involvement in a support group with others in the same boat can fill the void.

Among the most telling studies was a 1989 investigation led by Stanford University researchers. They evaluated 86 women with breast cancer that had spread to other parts of the body. Fifty of them attended weekly support group meetings for at least a year in addition to receiving standard medical treatment; 36 received only medical interventions.

Not surprisingly, women in the support groups reported feeling less anxious, less depressed and less bothered by pain than the women who had not participated in the meetings. A more remarkable finding was discovered years later. The women in the support groups survived longer than the others. In fact, four years after the study began, one-third of the participants in the support groups were still alive, while all 36 of the other women had died.

The investigators re-examined the medical records and death certificates of the women and found that such factors as differences in medical treatment did not account for the discrepancy in survival rates between the two groups. Some experts believe this strengthens the case for support groups. Experts also speculate that emotional assistance confers physical benefits by decreasing stress.

Depression overworks the body's stress response system, and it may be that participating in a support group helps lift depression. Thus a group of peers can be a place where people can vent some of their feelings without suffering guilt about burdening an intimate partner or friend.

Research on the mind-body connection with cancer is still preliminary; there is no doubt that emotional support can ease psychological stress. Support groups play an integral role in enhancing—and possibly prolonging—the lives of millions of people.

## The Back Page-

Fiction by Peter McGinn

(The rest of this work in progress can be found at [www.uoaportland.com](http://www.uoaportland.com).)

### Chapter 11 – Two Phone Calls

Mom's call came first. "Hi Mom," I said.

"Good, I'm glad you picked up."

"Well, it was ringing. What's up?"

"I think he's having an affair."

I have never liked the maestro, but I figured this isn't the time to take cheap shots at him. "Why do you think so?"

"I'd rather not say on the phone," she said, as if the Maestro might have tapped the phone or was lurking in a nearby doorway. "Can you come over?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said, my thoughts still full of the situation in Dad's house. "Jake is still here."

"Jake? The buffoon with the tattoo?"

"Yes," I replied, not bothering to point out that I had recently acted more like a buffoon than Jake had.

"What is he to you?"

That was a good question. "I'll come over," I said. I hung up, and the phone rang again. With a thrill that anyone in love would understand, I discovered it was Katt.

"Let's get together," she said.

"What, and tear myself away from pretending to be my future step-mother's fiancé? Are you crazy?" She laughed at the reminder of my predicament. "Actually," I added, "my Mom wants me to come over and help her. Would you like to tag along?"

"That depends. What sort of help does she need? Never mind. It can't be as weird as the situation over there in your father's mansion." When I hesitated she added, "Can it?"

"Of course not. She thinks her husband might be having an affair."

"I see," she said. "Have I thanked you yet for allowing me to be a part of your life?"

I ignored the sarcasm. "It's my pleasure."

"That's my point," she shot back. "Do you think he is seeing somebody?"

"He is capable of it," I replied, "but then again Mom is excitable. Once she was convinced he was a transvestite, because he studied what she wore, and then she caught him in her walk-in closet. Turns out he was buying her some clothes as a surprise. Another time, when she got a call from an insurance agent about her new policy, she thought he was plotting her death. But it was travel insurance for a surprise trip to Europe."

"Sounds like he needs to stop surprising her," Katt observed.

"That's what I said, but Mom insists she loves surprises."

"Women," Katt said dismissively, "don't ever get involved with tone."

"I'll try to remember that," I said. "I'll pick you up once I figure out what to tell Dad, Michelle and Jake."

"Keep it simple," she advised me. "Jake doesn't know you're pretending to be his wife's fiancé, so it will seem normal that you are going to see your Mom. Even tattooed felons have mothers."

I could see she wasn't just a pretty face. "I bet tattooed felons don't have girlfriends like you."

"No," she said without missing a beat. "Not unless girlfriends like me get tired of pointing out the obvious to their loser boyfriends."

By my count, it was the first time she had referred to me as a boyfriend, so I found it easy to ignore the 'L' word. "I'll be right over to pick you up," I said.

**Next: A Man to Man Talk**

