

## **Granulomas**

### **What are they?**

Granulomas are tiny red bumps that can appear on the stoma but are more often around the edge of the stoma, where it joins the skin. They can be crumbly and might bleed easily because there are a lot of capillaries (little blood vessels) in there. They're really just nodules of tissue.

### **What causes them?**

White blood cells accumulate in an area of injury, where their role is to remove bacteria and other microscopic debris that might prevent healing or cause infection. That's a good thing. But sometimes, they "over heal," like white blood cells on steroids, and they form these tiny overgrowths of tissue.

Obviously, the granulomas started as a response to some kind of injury. For example, it might be from the skin being irritated by overly forceful cleaning, an allergic reaction to your appliance, the baseplate rubbing around the stoma because the hole is too small, or the stoma rubbing up against the pouch because your clothes or belt are pressing against it. The formation of granulomas might also be a delayed reaction to sutures from your surgery (even if it was a long time ago). No-one seems to understand why granulomas only form occasionally, in response to these common types of injury or irritation. That's still a mystery.

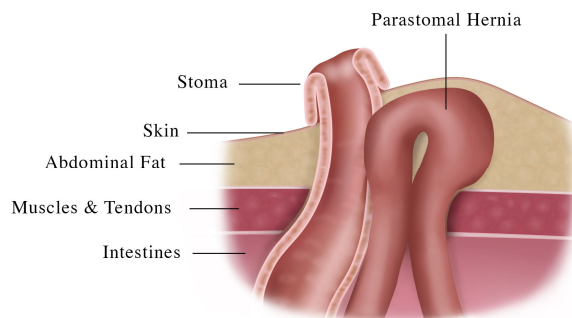
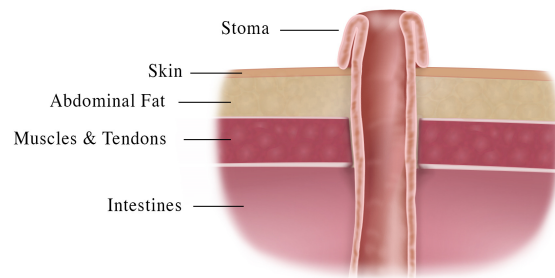
### **Treatment**

By themselves, granulomas are harmless. More of a nuisance, really. If they're not bothering you, you can live with them forever, and many people do. But sometimes granulomas can be uncomfortable or painful or too big, and if they bleed too much they can cause baseplate adhesion problems. This is definitely something to discuss with your physician or stoma nurse – first to get a firm diagnosis of granulomas, and then to develop a treatment plan.

- It might be enough just to eliminate the aggravating factors (e.g., by cleaning more gently, wearing looser clothing, or putting a lubricating product in your pouch to reduce rubbing against the stoma).
- Medical treatment often involves applying a corticosteroid or cauterizing the granulomas with silver nitrate (chemically burning them to destroy the tissue and reduce their size). That's not as bad as it sounds. Cauterizing is often used for other things like getting rid of unwanted warts or skin tags. If that doesn't help or if the granulomas keep returning, they're sometimes removed surgically under a local anesthetic.

## Hernias

To create your stoma, the surgeon made an incision in your abdomen and created a passageway for a portion of your intestine to reach your tummy. It first passes through the membrane that contains your intestines, then through layers of muscles and tendons, then through the fatty layer beneath your skin, and finally out through an opening in the skin.



The muscles around the stoma generally support it. But sometimes the edges of the stoma pull away from the muscles, enlarging the opening and allowing more intestines to push through – like two people comically trying to squeeze through a narrow doorway (when only one of them was invited). The resulting bulge is the first sign of a parastomal hernia, which literally means “hernia around the stoma.”