

# 5. Clothing and Style Hacks After Surgery

[00:00:00] Leaks happen, but life doesn't have to stop and neither do we.

[00:00:10] Hello and welcome back to Leaks, Laughs, and Life with a Urostomy. The podcast that proves Bladder less living comes with challenges, a surprising amount of comedy, and the chance to find your zest for life again.

[00:00:23] I'm Dawn, a wife, mother, artist, a Urostomate and your guide through the ups and downs and occasional, "oh, no!" moments of urostomy life.

[00:00:34] Before we dive in, I want to gently remind you that I am not a medical professional. I'm sharing my lived experience from my own urostomy journey, and from my husband Alex's Neobladder journey. Because bladder free living comes in many forms; from leak disasters to travel hacks, from emotional hurdles to unexpected victories.

[00:00:56] Always speak with your surgeon or medical team about decisions regarding [00:01:00] your own care. My goal here is to simply create a safe space to laugh, learn, and feel a little less alone.

[00:01:09] Each episode brings real talk, practical insight, and a heartfelt encouragement on everything from surgery prep, and supplies to relationships, self-confidence and reclaiming your joy. You're not alone in this.

[00:01:24] Thank you for being here.

[00:01:26] It tells me you showed up on purpose, and that means more than you know.

[00:01:32] Today we're discussing clothing and style hacks after surgery.

[00:01:37] You would think there wouldn't be much to talk about, but, oh, there is.

[00:01:42] Before my surgery, I was really curious and began searching for what clothing can I wear for urostomies.

[00:01:48] What I found was not helpful. I found crazy looking bags and basically moo-moos. Yay. No, no judgment if you wear them, but not for me.

[00:02:00] And then there was the, you don't need a whole new wardrobe after your urostomy. You can wear what you used to before.

[00:02:07] Well, that kind of depends on several factors. First, it depends on what your style was before.

[00:02:13] If you love tight jeans and super tight leggings, you're going to have to rethink your style at least for a few months.

[00:02:21] There is also the arrangement of the incisions from your surgery to consider. Some of, you'll be lucky to have just a few little incisions where the robotic arms went in. While others, like me, may have the whole zipper style incision, belly button to pubic hair in which this case, zippers, tight pants, jeans, shapewear, and tight yoga pants are not your friends.

[00:02:47] Since, surgery, my style has changed. I can no longer wear tight pants of any kind. I had to buy slightly bigger sizes and pants and underwear in order to be comfortable. And then I realized my clothes don't [00:03:00] have to hide me. They just have to work with me.

[00:03:03] Comfortable clothing is key, not fashion forward clothing right now. That will come later.

[00:03:10] So you're wondering, "what can I wear then?" So let's build a wardrobe that supports your healing and your confidence.

[00:03:17] First, let's start with what not to wear, at least for the first few months.

[00:03:23] Low-rise pants. Mm-hmm. They will directly hit under your pouch or right across the pouch and will cause major irritation and enormous pressure on incisions and your stoma area.

[00:03:37] Tight waistbands or stretch pants. These types of pants that have a tight abdomen area. Can pinch or restrict flow into your bag, thus making you extremely uncomfortable.

[00:03:49] Also, when the pouch fills up, it creates this, um, slightly odd looking bulge. Um, no [00:04:00] judgment because we're all gonna go through this, but just saying it's a little awkward at times.

[00:04:06] And shapewear. Mm, no, absolutely not. Uhuh, no way. The high compression can obstruct output and it causes more issues and too much pressure on the incisions, your pouch and your wafer. I said goodbye to these for good. They're way too painful.

[00:04:24] Rigid denim. You definitely won't be wearing these during the early healing stages. They are too stiff on and near the incisions. Later months down the road. You may be able to return to some of these, but don't rush into them. Please don't rush into them. If you love your jeans, you may have to do a larger size for a few months, just so it's not restricting your pouch and stoma area. But, no irritation is better than being totally irritated. Trust me.

[00:04:55] I'm gonna share with you my golden rules of urostomy fashion.

[00:05:00] 'cause I'm so fashion forward. No, not really, but you know, I try and these apply to everyone, no matter your age, your style, or your gender.

[00:05:11] Number one, comfort is not giving up or being sloppy. It's choosing fabrics and fits that don't irritate and don't put pressure on your stoma or incisions.

[00:05:24] Number two, flexibility is key. Your body changes sizes during recovery, swollen or bloated abdomen, fluids shift and things tend to move around a bit. This is very common early in recovery and will fade in time.

[00:05:42] Number three, high-rise pants are pure magic. They secure your pouch. They prevent pulling on the bag and smooth out everything under your clothes.

[00:05:54] Number four, dark colors are your loyal friends, not because you need to hide the [00:06:00] leaks, but because they reduce the anxiety for those, "oh, no!" moments if they do happen.

[00:06:07] Number five, fabric weight matters. A little structure hides outlines naturally without trying, but nothing too heavy or thick.

[00:06:17] Guys, joggers or sweatpants or lightweight cargo pants work really well.

[00:06:22] Ladies, medium to lightweight, flowing, printed fabrics, work wonderfully in the summer. Warmer, still flowy, fabrics are good in the winter and the fall.

[00:06:33] Number six, layers are confidence boosters. Ladies in the fall and winter cardigans, vests, long shirts, soft jackets, they all add movement, which not only looks stylish, but it also helps with the ease of movement and hiding things.

[00:06:50] Number seven, elastic waistbands are your new friends. There are plenty of styles out there that have elastic waistbands, not just the grandma or grandpa [00:07:00] pants. So find some that fit your style. They will be your best friends for a while.

[00:07:06] Next, we'll go over clothing staples that just work. And keep in mind, this is not forever. It is just for the few months. Comfort is key during these healing stages. The more comfortable you are, the better life will be for you. I promise.

[00:07:22] Soft and high waisted leggings or joggers won't dig into your stoma. Just make sure they're not too tight. You may need to go up a size or two for the first few months. They're supportive, stretchy, and forgiving, and are your best friends.

[00:07:37] Shorts not the short shorts, your pouch will hang out at the bottom or tight shorts, but loose shorts for the guys and loose flowing shorts for the ladies.

[00:07:48] You will need fabric and air flowing around the pouch in the summer. Otherwise, there will be what's called ballooning. I talk about ballooning in my urostomy bags 1 0 1 podcast.

[00:07:59] If you get [00:08:00] the balloonless pouches, they're worth their weight in gold. I tell you!

[00:08:03] Ladies flowy tops for the summer and loose sweaters and tunics, longline cardigans. They will all become your best friends in the fall, and as it moves into winter.

[00:08:15] For the guys, relaxed tees or longer sweatshirts and sweaters will give you more room to move. No clinging to your pouch, and it will cover the pouch bump, not restricting in any way.

[00:08:27] Ladies, about four months down the road, you may be able to move into stretchy jeans or pants, which will allow you that put together look. Just make sure they are not tight. Make sure sitting is comfortable and walking in them as well is comfortable.

[00:08:44] For those of you who like dresses, A-lines or empire waist, are very comfortable, very flattering and perfect for airflow around the pouch.

[00:08:53] I found some past the knee length nightgowns that looked like dresses on Amazon and no one even knew they were pajamas. [00:09:00] They were really comfortable and didn't look like grandma's moo-moos. No judgment. Again, if you like that style, it's just not my style, but they were really pretty and I got lots of compliments on them.

[00:09:12] Note to self. Keep trying new things until you find something that works for you. Everyone's style is different.

[00:09:21] Belts and underwear are the next things we're gonna talk about. And at first, I was really not in love with the belt systems.

[00:09:29] First, I couldn't figure out how to do the elastic stretchy bands that came with the pouches. And after I did, I greatly disliked them.

[00:09:36] They cut into my sides and they weren't really that supportive. I used them directly after a pouch changed to support it until the adhesive expanded and felt more comfortable, and then I take 'em off.

[00:09:48] Then I ordered a pouch holder, usually called an ostomy belt. Now these are thicker, they're Velcro attached in the back and your pouch slides into the belt [00:10:00] through a hole in the back of the belt and then unzips at the bottom.

[00:10:06] Well, my first mistake was that I ordered one that was for a man. It was too big and very bulky for me. So I fought with it and I ended up not using it because it was more uncomfortable than anything.

[00:10:19] And then I found a large pair of short style underwear for women, and I cut out the crotch part of them so it made just like a wide waist belt. And it actually worked really well. But then I couldn't find any more like them.

[00:10:33] So I had to look for other alternatives. I found tube tops. Nope, those were too tight.

[00:10:40] And then there were stoma wraps. But I didn't wanna pay \$50 for one of those. I did find, supportive ostomy slash urostomy underwear, and they have a pouch inside the underwear to put your pouch into.

[00:10:57] These aren't very sexy, but at this [00:11:00] point, really who cares? They're great for physical activity, necessary for walking or standing to support your pouch and the skin around it. But again, I couldn't afford to buy more than one at \$50 a pop. Just too expensive for my blood.

[00:11:16] I was at Walmart one day and walking through the underwear department and saw some maternity underwear and thought, "Hmm, they're lightweight. They're very stretchy, and there's lots of room around the middle, and they're breathable. Maybe these will work." Imagine this 60-year-old woman purchasing maternity underwear, the look I got from the lady at the checkout stand was quite funny. I did explain that I had a urostomy and she was like, "okay, whatever." Don't need to explain to everybody what's going on in our lives. I just laughed through it.

[00:11:58] Unfortunately, they still weren't [00:12:00] enough support, but they were really comfortable. And the waist, although it was really high, I didn't really mind that.

[00:12:08] And then for Christmas, my daughter, bless her heart, gave me the lady's ostomy belt, and it works like a dream.

[00:12:14] It helps keep the pouch closer to my body. It smooth things out under my clothes. My pouch is supported and it also helps stop the pulling when rubbing it up against stretchy jeans or pants, and I can wear my maternity underwear over it!

[00:12:30] For guys. Sorry guys. If you love your whitey tidies, I'm afraid they aren't going to cut it. The pouch will hang out at the bottom of the underwear and they offer no support for the weight of the pouch. I recommend wearing ostomy belts along with the men's style underwear shorts. You know the ones that look like shorts. They will work perfectly as they're long enough to hide the pouch so it won't stick out of the bottom of the leg, and they offer a bit more support.

[00:12:58] Nighttime wear [00:13:00] like pajamas, the comfier the better.

[00:13:02] Depending on what you normally wear to bed, things may or may not change for you. Finding your nighttime rhythm is going to take some time, and comfort is key. You don't wanna be wrestling around with your pajamas and the hose to your nighttime bag. It can get super frustrating.

[00:13:17] And remember, if you connect to a nighttime bag, the hose must be long enough to move around. Sleeping in your birthday suit may suit you just fine, but fair warning, the pouch may get a bit tangled. It tends to roll blocking flow into the hose.

[00:13:34] And ladies, I don't recommend long nightgowns. It's like World War III trying to get untwisted from the night bag and the gowns in the middle of the night. Not comfortable and very frustrating.

[00:13:47] Loose fitting, long pajama bottoms can work for sleeping, although the tube can get wrapped around your leg in the pant leg. To help with that, you can cut a hole in the side of the pajama bottom leg or up where the pocket [00:14:00] is for the hose to hang out of or to go in and connect to the bag rather than having it go all the way down the leg. Just depends on if you move a lot at night or if you lay in one position all night, what's gonna work best for you.

[00:14:15] The thing that I found works best for me is wearing a short set. It's a cotton blend with elastic waist and a longer shirt, and they have been my saving grace.

[00:14:25] The shorts keep the pouch in place. It still will get twisted occasionally, but in general it works very well. The shorts also make it easy to attach and disconnect from the night bag.

[00:14:36] While we're on the subject of sleeping, I do recommend purchasing two or three bed protectors.

[00:14:43] You can either buy the flat protectors, or you can buy one of the mattress pad protectors that already have plastic in the pad. These will come in handy for those surprise leak nights, and you're gonna have some of those in the beginning. It's just part of the [00:15:00] game. I found it really nice to be able to tear off the wet bedding and throw it in the washer and then be able to make up the bed and go back to sleep.

[00:15:09] There are a few occasions though, few and far between, where you may have a couple leaks at night, especially during the early weeks when you're resting after surgery and you're not used to how things feel yet. So, it's really nice to have those extra protectors.

[00:15:30] Swimsuits, yes, you can go swimming with your, urostomy pouch, and I can vouch that you can even go to Hot Springs! The brand I used stayed on for three days, and I didn't have to change it. I was expecting to have to

change it, every time I got outta the hot springs, but I didn't. I was really surprised, very happy about that.

[00:15:50] I had a swimsuit top, so I really only needed bottoms, and I love my swimsuit bottoms I bought from, it's called ostomy [00:16:00] secrets.com, from Convatec.

[00:16:02] They have wraps that can be used by both men and women, so you can wear them under swimsuits if you already have them. They have men swim shorts and swim bottoms for women. There's not a huge selection and all of the items say it's for ostomy, but they work for us urostomates as well. This worked out well for me 'cause I already had a top and I just really needed the bottoms because the bottoms I had were too tight.

[00:16:28] You can wear wraps under your old swimsuit. Like I said earlier, the band is long enough to hide the pouch and if you aren't self-conscious, you could wear a bikini or two piece suit, but you would see the band.

[00:16:41] Next, is the confidence layer. Even if no one else notices your pouch in the early months. You will feel like they can see it. As time goes on, you don't worry about it as much. You become more comfortable with yourself and your pouch.

[00:16:55] There are some days, I forget, I have one on until it gets [00:17:00] full.

[00:17:00] The key is to dress in a way that feels secure. Then your brain stops obsessing about what if someone sees something? Confidence comes from feeling supported, not hidden, not disguised, supported.

[00:17:13] A final word about style after surgery. One day soon, you'll forget to think about your pouch. It happens. You'll put clothes on because you like them, not because they hide things, and you'll catch your reflection and think, "oh, there I am!"

[00:17:33] Thank you so much for listening to Leaks, Laughs and Life with Urostomy. I hope this episode gave you a few insights, maybe a laugh, and reminded you that you're not alone in this journey.

[00:17:43] If you found it helpful, please subscribe so you don't miss an episode and share it with someone who might need to hear it.

[00:17:51] For more information, tips and tricks or a copy of the show notes, please go to my [00:18:00] [website@leakslaughslife.com](mailto:website@leakslaughslife.com).

[00:18:01] Next week we're diving into a topic that almost every urostomate eventually encounters. Urinary tract infections. We will talk about why they are more common after bladder removal. How to recognize the signs early, what is normal versus what needs medical attention and the practical prevention strategies that make a difference.

[00:18:23] UTIs can feel confusing and sometimes scary in a re-plumbed body, so we are going to break it down in a clear, straightforward way so that you can feel informed instead of anxious. If you've ever wondered, "is this normal?" Or "should I call my doctor?" This episode will be for you.

[00:18:42] Until then, take care of yourself.

[00:18:44] Be gentle with your body, and remember, laughter is life's best medicine.

[00:18:50] Leaks happen, laugh often, and I will see you next [00:19:00] week.