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## JAN / FEB 2026

### WRITING – A PATHWAY TO HEALING



Facing a major illness or undergoing surgery can be an overwhelming experience, not only physically but also emotionally and mentally. During medical treatments and recovery, many find solace and strength in writing, whether through drafting a memoir or

jotting down notes in a personal journal. Both forms of writing offer distinct benefits that can aid in healing, providing a powerful tool for navigating the challenges of illness.

One of the most profound impacts of writing, particularly during or after a health crisis, is the emotional release it provides. Reflecting on, and then writing about the events allows individuals to recount their experiences in detail, creating a narrative that gives meaning to what they have gone through. When dealing with illness, emotions like fear, anxiety, and uncertainty often feel all-encompassing. Writing offers a safe space to process these feelings, reducing stress and anxiety. By putting thoughts on paper, individuals can gain perspective, distance themselves from overwhelming emotions, and make sense of their journey. Writing can also help a person feel more in control of their health journey. Illness or surgery can leave a person feeling powerless, as so much is dictated by medical professionals and the physical body. When someone recounts their experience, they become the storyteller, reframing the events in a way that empowers them. They can choose which details to highlight, what lessons to emphasize, and how their personal growth is shaped through the narrative. This active role in their own story can renew a sense of agency. Writing also provides an opportunity for introspection. Whether it's journaling daily thoughts or crafting a memoir, the act of writing forces individuals to slow down and reflect on their inner world. This process can uncover new insights about one's strength, resilience, and capacity to overcome adversity. For those recovering from surgery or managing a chronic illness, these revelations can be life-changing, fostering a deeper understanding of self and the ways they can adapt to and rise above physical limitations.

### *In This Issue*

<i>Writing - A Pathway to Healing</i>	1
<i>President's Message</i>	3
<i>Preparing for FOWC</i>	5
<i>Cold Remedies: What works, What Doesn't, What can Hurt</i>	6
<i>What Does a Healthy Eating Pattern Look Like</i>	8
<i>Now What???</i>	12
<i>Hernia Prevention: Tips from an Athlete Living with a Stoma</i>	14
<i>Membership</i>	16

### UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

**February 17** - 7:00 pm - Chat Room topic TBA

**April 10 (Friday)** 2:00 - 4:00 - Open house at Jolly's. Stop by for a coffee and meet some folks

**May TBA** - Spring Education Day



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Cont'd on page 4

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Visiting Coordinator	Ruth Suderman	306-450-4690
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# What's a Chat Room?

It's not really a meeting but a chance to join up with others who live with an ostomy. Whether you have questions or hope to hear something you don't know about your ostomy, or your friend/family member's ostomy, join us for that discussion. Don't be shy, you don't have to talk. You don't even have to have your video on. You can pop in and leave any time you want. We'll throw out some ideas and some "tips and tricks" and see where the conversation goes.



**ZOOM Meeting Coordinates**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83082960617?pwd=uRSKgaDS21if0dRtMVUsaCJbAVTana.1>

Meeting ID: 830 8296 0617

Passcode: 734061

## "Greetings from Patty"



Happy New Year Friends!

Living with an ostomy can bring unique challenges, but it can also be a fresh opportunity to focus on health, confidence, and self-care. Here are some thoughtful, empowering resolutions to start the year strong:

1. Prioritize Comfort and Skin Health – Your NSWOC is available if you are having skin irritation or leak issues.
2. Build Confidence in Your Body – Practice positive self-talk and remind yourself that your ostomy is part of your strength story
3. Stay Active and Energized – Set realistic fitness goals that work with your energy levels.
4. Nourish Your Body Wisely - Stay hydrated to avoid blockages and dehydration.
5. Plan for Peace of Mind – Carry a small “emergency kit” with extra supplies when going out.
6. Consider being involved in our ostomy support group to share experiences and tips.

Instead of focusing on what you “can’t” do, frame your resolutions around what you can do to live more comfortably, confidently, and joyfully.

Our next **zoom chat** room will be on Tuesday, February 17 at 7 o’clock. New and experienced members welcome. Any subjects are open for discussion. Zoom coordinates are with the “What’s a Chat Room” and will be sent again by email and Facebook closer to February 17.

If you haven’t done so, your sponsorship (membership) is due. Don’t miss out on any of the events Ostomy Canada and Ostomy Saskatchewan present. Information on how to send this in is in the newsletter.

**Save the Date:** We are planning an education day on Saturday, May 9th (location yet to be determined). This is a great opportunity to gather as a provincial support group and enjoy speakers who will inspire. More information will be forthcoming.

“Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for talk beside the fire; it is the time for home.” —*Edith Sitwell*

### Membership Reminder

For the 2026 year please remit a minimum \$30 donation. This will maintain your relationship with Ostomy Saskatchewan and Ostomy Canada. Income tax receipts will be issued for the full amount.

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**Debit/Credit:** Go to the DONATE NOW page on the Ostomy Canada website. Fill in the details. Choose “Saskatchewan” under “Fund Area”. Mark yourself as a “Supporter” <https://www.ostomycanada.ca/donation/>



### Get The Support You Need!

#### OSTOMY VISITOR PROGRAM

Speak to a Certified Ostomy Visitor for personal support with your ileostomy, colostomy, urostomy or j-pouch. Visits are available at the hospital, in-person, phone & virtually. It could be either pre-operative or post-operative or both. At times you may just have a few questions or at other times you may be ‘working’ your way through something and it’s good to talk to someone who can relate to your situation personally. All you have to do is ask.

A visit may be arranged by calling the Visiting Coordinator, Ruth Suderman at 306-450-4690 or emailing [sudermanruth@gmail.com](mailto:sudermanruth@gmail.com)



*Article continued from front page*

For those who plan on writing a memoir, their writing offers the chance to leave a lasting legacy. Sharing the story of an illness or recovery can be a way to inspire others going through similar challenges. In crafting a memoir, individuals create a permanent record of their journey that can comfort loved ones or provide insight to others facing similar struggles. Even if shared only with close friends or family, a memoir can create a connection that fosters healing on both sides.

For those not inclined toward a full memoir, daily journaling is an accessible and effective alternative. Unlike memoir writing, which tends to focus on the big picture and life lessons, journaling is often more immediate and raw. It allows people to vent frustrations, document small wins in recovery, and track their emotional fluctuations over time. Studies have shown that expressive writing, such as journaling, can lower blood pressure, boost immune function, and reduce the symptoms of depression.

Whether through structured memoir writing or free form journaling, the act of writing can be a powerful tool for healing after a major illness or surgery. It allows individuals to process their emotions, regain a sense of control, and uncover valuable insights about themselves. For many, these benefits extend beyond physical recovery, leading to a deeper emotional and psychological healing as well.

In times of medical crisis, pen and paper (or a keyboard) can become invaluable allies on the road to recovery.

*Source: written and submitted by Amy Taylor, via Ostomy Toronto Newsletter, October 2024, via Stratford Ostomy News,*



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*Our Deepest Sympathy*

We've lost three of our long term members of the former Ostomy Regina, now Ostomy Saskatchewan

Bob Baker, who was an enthusiastic visitor with our peer-to-peer Visitor Program passed in July. Pat Liebel just passed in November. Pat and her husband Lloyd regularly attended our meetings for many years. And in early December June Crawford, a long term member and dedicated volunteer, left us. Our sympathy goes out to their family and friends.

## Preparing for FOWC (Friends of Ostomates Worldwide Canada)

In November a few of us gathered at the Ostomy and Wound Clinic to sort and prepare ostomy supplies that cannot be used in our clinic, to be shipped for FOWC use. The need is never ending in a world where so many countries with ostomates don't have access to ostomy products. Keep FOWC in mind if you're considering a donation. <https://www.fowc.ca>



# Valentine

WORD SCRAMBLE

Unscramble these fun Valentine's Day words!

1. EAHRT \_\_\_\_\_
2. ISKS \_\_\_\_\_
3. UHG \_\_\_\_\_
4. YAMILF \_\_\_\_\_
5. VLOE \_\_\_\_\_
6. EVNAILTEN \_\_\_\_\_
7. YCDAN \_\_\_\_\_
8. ECTHAOLOL \_\_\_\_\_
9. TEWSE \_\_\_\_\_
10. YOENH \_\_\_\_\_

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## Cold remedies: What works, what doesn't, what can't hurt (mayoclinic.org *By Mayo Clinic Staff*)

There's no cure for the common cold. But what about cold remedies that claim to make you feel better faster? Find out what's effective — and what's not.

Cold remedies are almost as common as the common cold. But do they work? Nothing can cure a cold, which is caused by germs called viruses. But some remedies might help ease your symptoms and keep you from feeling so bad. Here's a look at some common cold remedies and what's known about them.



Image courtesy of Freepik

### Cold remedies that work

If you catch a cold, expect to be sick for 1 to 2 weeks. That doesn't mean you have to feel awful. The following might help you feel better:

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Water, juice, clear broth or warm lemon water with honey helps loosen stuffiness, called congestion. These also help prevent losing too much fluid, called dehydration. Don't drink alcohol, coffee and sodas with caffeine. They can make dehydration worse.
- **Rest.** Your body needs rest to heal.
- **Sip warm liquids.** Many cultures use warm liquids, such as chicken soup, tea or warm apple juice, for colds. Warm liquids might ease stuffiness by increasing mucus flow.
- **Try honey.** Honey may help coughs in adults and children who are older than age 1. Try it in warm tea or lemon water.
- **Add cool moisture to the air.** A cool-mist vaporizer or humidifier can add moisture to your home. Moisture might help ease stuffiness. Change the water daily. Clean the unit as the maker instructs.

### Soothe a sore throat

If you have a sore throat, using a saltwater gargle can relieve it for a while. Put 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon salt in an 8-ounce glass of warm water. Children younger than 6 years most likely can't gargle. You also can try ice chips, sore throat sprays, lozenges or hard candy. Take care when giving lozenges or hard candy to children because they can choke on them. Don't give lozenges or hard candy to children younger than 6 years.

### Ease stuffiness

Saline nasal drops and sprays you can get without a prescription can help relieve stuffiness. For infants, experts suggest putting a few saline drops into one nostril. Then use a bulb syringe to gently suck out that nostril. To do this, squeeze the bulb, gently place the syringe tip in the nostril about 1/4 to 1/2 inch (about 6 to 12 millimeters), and slowly release the bulb. You can use saline nasal sprays in older children.

### Relieve pain

Adults can take acetaminophen (Tylenol, others), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others) or aspirin. Do not give children or teenagers aspirin. Aspirin has been linked to Reye's syndrome, a rare life-threatening condition, in children or teenagers who have the flu or chickenpox.

For treatment of fever or pain, consider giving your child infants' or children's versions of medicines available without a prescription. Examples are acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others). These can be used as a safer alternative to aspirin.

### Try cold and cough medicines

For adults and children age 5 and older, decongestants, antihistamines and pain relievers available without a prescription might ease some symptoms. But they won't prevent a cold or shorten how long it lasts. And most have some side effects.

Experts agree that these shouldn't be given to younger children. Using too much of these medicines or not using them the right way can cause serious damage. Talk with your child's healthcare professional before giving any medicines.

Take medicines only as the label says. Some cold remedies have mixed ingredients, such as a decongestant plus a pain reliever. If you also take a pain reliever, taking a decongestant with a pain reliever could cause problems. Read the labels of cold medicines to make sure you're not taking too much of any medicine.

### Cold remedies that don't work

The list of cold remedies that don't give relief is long. Some of the more common ones include:

#### Medicines called antibiotics

These attack germs called bacteria. But they're no help against cold viruses. Don't ask your healthcare professional for antibiotics for a cold or use old antibiotics you have. You won't get well faster. And using antibiotics when you don't need them adds to the serious and growing problem of germs that can resist antibiotics.

#### Cold and cough medicines in young children

Cold and cough medicine you can get without a prescription can harm children. Do not give any cough

Con't from page 6

and cold medicines to children under age 4 years. Talk with your child's healthcare professional before giving any medicines to children ages 4 to 6 years. Know that these medicines may not help much and may have side effects.

**Cold remedies with mixed study results**

In spite of ongoing studies, the scientists still don't know whether some cold remedies, such as vitamin C and zinc, work. Here's what studies show:

**Vitamin C**

Taking vitamin C has not been shown to help prevent colds. But some studies have found that taking vitamin C before cold symptoms start may shorten how long symptoms last. Vitamin C may help people at high risk of colds because they're often in contact with the viruses that cause colds. For instance, children who go to group child care during the winter are at high risk.

**Zinc**

Some studies show that zinc lozenges or syrup may prevent a cold or shorten symptoms. Other studies show zinc doesn't help. Zinc can have harmful side effects. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration advises against using products with zinc you put in your nose. They can cause you to lose your sense of smell. Talk with your healthcare professional before using zinc.

**Take care of yourself**

Although colds go away on their own, they can make you feel awful. You might want to try the latest remedy. But the best relief comes from taking care of yourself. Rest, drink fluids and keep the air around you moist. Remember to wash your hands often so you don't give your cold to others. ■

**O**n the first day of school, the teacher asked a student, "What are your parents' names?" The student replied, "My father's name is Laughing and my mother's name is Smiling." The teacher said, "Are you kidding?" The student said, "No, Kidding is my brother. I am Joking."



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## What Does a Healthy Eating Pattern Look Like?

**Step 1:** Make half your plate vegetables and fruits. Vegetables and fruits should regularly make up the largest proportion of the foods you eat throughout the day.

**Step 2:** Make one-quarter of your plate whole grain foods.

**Step 3:** Make one-quarter of your plate protein foods. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often such as beans, lentils, nuts, seeds and tofu. Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat. Try practising these healthy eating habits as often as possible:

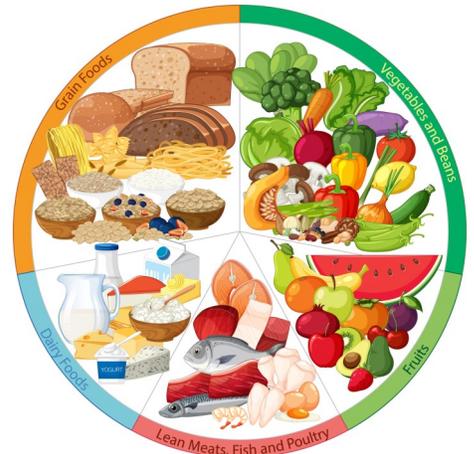
**Be mindful of your eating habits.** Take time to eat and notice when you are hungry and when you are full.

**Cook more often.** Do this by planning what you eat and involving others in planning and preparing meals.

**Enjoy** the taste of food and the many food-related activities that go along with eating. This can include shopping for food and growing or harvesting your own food. You can also involve those you live with in meal preparation.

**Eat meals with others.** This allows you to enjoy quality time together, share food traditions and explore new foods.

*Source: Luminohealth.Sunlife.ca, via Stratford Ostomy News, September 2024; Ottawa Ostomy Nov 2025.*



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# CHRISTMAS GATHERING 2025

## 2025 LOOK BACK

Ostomy Saskatchewan is growing, we're trying some new things and working to reach out to more people across the province. In March we had a great presentation on skin care by our very own Carla Zahaik and Christie Seymour (Convatec). Once the warmer weather started moving in, we gathered for our seminar, Spring into Education where we had a full day with a hands-on project with our Hollister folks, Carmen Leclerc and NSWOC Karen Spencer and as well great presentations by others. Our Pizza Pasta event in early June raise money for our three youth campers. The 2025 Step Up Awareness and Fundraising event was great. We had a meet up in both Saskatoon and in Regina. It was so good to have people in Saskatoon come out and get involved. Ostomy Canada held a number of webinars over the year which are always interesting and helpful. In November our we held "Chat Room", a zoom place to ask questions and learn. On December 6<sup>th</sup> thirty-five of us enjoyed a Christmas social in a local restaurant in Regina. We were able to get some fun games in and some good visiting.



It was a good year, thanks to all of you, our sponsors (Jolly's Medical & Athletic Supplies & Medical1 Physician & Health Care Supplies) and our advertisers. A special thank you to our NSWOCs all across the province for their support of all those living with an ostomy.

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Image by pikisuperstar on Freepik

## Now What???

**I thought this article captures the nature of what we all have gone through or are going through now as we are living with our ostomy and learning to experience life at its fullest.**

Wallet, cell phone, keys...I've always had my essentials when I leave the house. But for the past several years, I've added something else to my checklist: ostomy supplies. When you have an ostomy, you have to be ready for anything. The instant fill, the gas attack, and of course, the leak. Oh, the dreaded leak. It can happen anytime. Or, so it seems. But does it really?

I have this image in my head of catastrophe. There I am, in the middle of the grocery store aisle, my bag has completely fallen off as I stand in a puddle of stool that's splashed across the floor while output shoots out of me like an over-the-top 80's horror movie as I stand petrified, children crying out and everyone staring and pointing in disgust.

I mean, pretty worst-case-scenario stuff. But, it's hard not to go there. Imagine, worrying about poop (or pee for urostomates) coming out of a hole in your stomach. Like, your front. Where everybody sees. This isn't some "oopsie" you can pretend never happened. This is a big ol' brown or yellow stain on the front of your shirt. And nobody's been drinking coffee.

But is this image even real? I do have a tendency to imagine the worst. Some may even say it's a talent. My therapist calls it a "cognitive distortion."

In reality, I've had leaks in public. And that's all they've ever been – small little leaks that can be covered with tape until I'm able to get to a good spot. In two cases it's been a bigger leak and I was still able to get home and take care of it. So, it's fear more than reality.

I'm scared of being embarrassed in public due to my ostomy bag. It's a common fear. Everyone is afraid of being embarrassed. It's a deep-rooted fear. But my ostomy seems to add a lack of control. I can control things like what I wear and how I act, but I have this stoma with a mind of its own. It's like having that "one friend." Sure, they're great at home when no one else is around, but take them out in public and you have to constantly worry about what they say. Or, perhaps what they "blurt out" without warning. (However, unlike a loud friend, you are allowed to use tape to control ostomy pouch leaks).

My ostomy (ileostomy) is permanent. I will have it for life. I need to improve my relationship with it. One way I'm doing that is by being prepared. That's really all I can do. Before I go somewhere, I check to make sure it's good. Check the seal. Check the stoma. I now use ostomy pouches with a see-through window just for peace of mind. I try to carry tape with me everywhere I go. It's simple athletic tape, but it seals leaks and I can add a lot if need be. That I put in my pocket. In a smaller bag/sweet fanny pack, I have extra pre-cut ostomy bags, disposable bed pads (brand new, out-of-the-box, they're very thin and easy to fit into a small bag), ostomy paste, paper towels (I use blue Scott Shop Towels because they're soft and extra absorbent), and extra trash bags (the ones that come with the pouches). I have everything I need for a quick change.

If I'm going somewhere where I'm a little worried I might not be able to find a place to change fast, I carry a backpack with more supplies and a complete change of clothes. Also, I've been working on "de-catastrophizing" before I even leave the house. Instead of simply imagining the worst, I think about the realistic possibility of it actually happening. I've worn an ostomy pouch for over four years and have never come close to the disaster I envision. It's basically physically impossible for the bag to simply fall off. Every part of the wafer would have to come loose at once. Plus, I typically wear an ostomy wrap (and just got an ostomy belt). So...not going to happen. There might be a leak. But I've got that handled. I've handled it before. It's not a big deal. It always seems to be fear that holds me back more than my ostomy. That's good news, though. Because while I can't control what comes out of me and when, I can control how I deal with my anxiety about it.

### **Ostomy Anxiety, Horror in the Grocery Store**

*by Robin Glover, via UOAA July E-News (Metro Maryland Ostomy September 2025)*

*Robin Glover is a writer based in the Houston area. He has a permanent ostomy after being diagnosed with Crohn's Disease in 2017.*

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## Hernia Prevention Tips From an Athlete Living With a Stoma

Collin Jarvis, an ileostomate and athlete, shares his tips for getting back to exercise, re-building your abdominal core, and helping prevent parastomal hernias.

Learn how to get active, re-build your core strength, and help prevent a hernia. My name is Collin Jarvis, and I've had an ileostomy since 2014. When I had surgery I was in college and competed as a track and field athlete, so it was important for me to understand how to avoid getting a hernia when I returned to intense physical exercise. In this article, I'll be sharing some things that people living with an ostomy can do to help prevent parastomal hernias.

### Tip #1 – Get active again as soon as you can

Make sure to get moving as quickly as possible after your ostomy surgery but be safe about your approach. Talk with your clinicians about what level of activity is appropriate for where you are in your recovery process. Getting active after surgery is one of the best things you can do to re-strengthen your abdominal wall and lower the chances of developing a hernia. In most cases, this starts with going on daily walks. You can progress from there as your incisions heal and the swelling from surgery subsides.

### Tip #2 – Understand the purpose of hernia support belts and support garments

It's not certain whether a hernia support belt will keep a new hernia from forming, but it may help one manage an existing hernia. It's important to be aware of this so that you don't return to physical activity and core strengthening believing that a hernia belt will prevent a parastomal hernia. Often, the biggest barriers to getting active again after stoma surgery are challenges related to leakage, comfort, or appearance – all of which can be addressed by wearing an ostomy support garment. In my personal experience and as someone who has spoken to thousands of other ostomates, I've found that the additional security of support garments – such as ostomy wraps and underwear – can make the experience of getting active much more comfortable and less intimidating. Since we know that getting active again after surgery is one of the best ways to prevent a hernia, I believe that wearing an ostomy support garment can help facilitate the return to physical activity.

### Tip #3 – Re-build your abdominal core strength and use functional movement

Some of us who have had ostomy surgery will come out of the hospital with a weak core, bad posture, and, as a result, poor functional movement patterns. This can be due to a wide range of reasons, including a compromised abdominal wall from the surgery, prolonged sitting in

hospital beds, chronic pain, atrophied muscles, and even our psychological state. Each one of these things directly influences our posture and how we move, and these are two of the most important things we can work on to prevent a hernia (of any kind) from forming. My suggestion is to start by safely rebuilding your abdominal core strength, and improving your mobility and flexibility. Your abdominal muscles are the foundation for all movement and, by nature of having abdominal surgery, will be a primary point of focus for your postoperative recovery. Check with your physician to make sure it's OK to start this process, and ask about safe and targeted exercises you can try. Once you've built up the foundational core strength that you need to perform normal daily activities, my next recommendation is to contact a physical therapist (PT) and ask them about "functional movement patterns for hernia prevention." Most PTs have a wealth of knowledge on this subject and can teach you how to move in safe and functional ways. Typical rehabilitation and programming for functional movement patterns include both muscle restrengthening and mobility/flexibility exercises. Combine these strategies to help avoid hernias and live an active life.

Preventing a parastomal hernia from forming is a but achievable goal. While there is no single thing you can do to avoid getting a hernia, combining the strategies of safely returning to physical activity and working with a PT to ensure that you're moving in a safe, functional, and mobile way will be your best bet for living a healthy and comfortable life with your ostomy.

*Via: Hollister & Russell, Sarah. "Parastomal hernia and physical activity. Are patients getting the right advice?." British journal of nursing (Mark Allen Publishing) vol. 26,17 (2017): S12 S18; Vancouver Ostomy High Life July 2025*





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Membership is open to all persons interested in supporting people living with an ostomy and their circles of support. As a member supporter you can enjoy the benefits of being part of Ostomy Saskatchewan as well as Ostomy Canada. You'll receive newsletters, opportunities for webinars, a magazine and the support of people here and across the country. You will be supporting an organization that is striving to be the voice for people living with an ostomy in Canada.

A minimum \$30 "supporter" donation will give you all the benefits of membership. \$25 will go to Ostomy Canada and any amount above \$25 will be for Ostomy Saskatchewan, which allows us to continue to support our group with support and advocacy. No donation is too small or too big. You will receive a tax receipt for your entire donation. Memberships are for a calendar year so we will remind you it's time to renew late fall and early in the new year.

Your financial contribution supports many initiatives including the youth camp, an education fund for ostomy nurses, the visitor's program, educational seminars, outreach and training programs. We have regular get togethers and updates will be listed in the newsletter and/or on the website (<https://ostomysaskatchewan.ca>).

**ONLINE, e-TRANSFER or CHEQUE - Income tax receipts will be issued for entire donation.**

**Cheque:** Make your cheque out to Ostomy Canada Society Inc. *WRITE SASKATCHEWAN on the notation space at bottom of cheque.* MAIL TO: OSTOMY CANADA 5800 Ambler Dr., Suite 210 Mississauga, ON L4W 4J4 and email [ostomysask@gmail.com](mailto:ostomysask@gmail.com) with name, address, email and phone number.

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### MISSION STATEMENT

Ostomy Saskatchewan is a mutual support group for the benefit of people who have had, or are about to have intestinal or urinary diversion surgery.

#### Our purpose is:

- To help people with intestinal and/or urinary diversions to lead full and productive lives and to provide information and emotional support to their families and caregivers.
- To educate the public about intestinal and urinary diversion surgery.
- To provide trained visitors to someone who has undergone intestinal and/or urinary diversions, including preoperative and postoperative visits or phone calls, at the request of the individual, an ostomy nurse (NSWOC) or physician

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