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**RETURNING TO A FULL
AND ACTIVE LIFE**

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Although you may feel anxious and frustrated in the early weeks following your surgery, there is no reason why you should not return to a full active life. Remember that your body works differently now and you will need to take the time to organise your meals, activities and conversations. You also may feel differently about how your body looks and it will take time to adjust to this change. Ask your medical team for support with anything that you are finding difficult to cope with. This leaflet is designed to help you get the most out of your life.

Getting out and about

Remember that there is very little that you cannot do that you did not do before your operation. Just allow time to build up your confidence and learn to plan ahead. If you are going out, go on a full stomach and carry a small snack with you.

Out and about alone

There will come a time when you will have to go out alone. This can be quite frightening at first, but your confidence will grow as you adapt to the needs of your new body. Being well prepared helps. Other people have found the following items useful:

Spare stoma protector, small mirror, tissues, medical tweezers, pen and paper, mobile phone with emergency numbers, Medical card, Medic-Alert bracelet or necklace, inflatable pillow for long distance travel.

Returning to work

- ▶ Explain to your employer and work colleagues how you need to organise your meals, activities and conversations so that they can support you.
- ▶ If you go out, eat before leaving and carry a snack with you.

“My colleagues quickly noticed that I got tired after my lunch. So we all swap round and I do the admin work until I recover.” (CP)

Eating Out

These days eating out should cause few problems. Try the following:

- ▶ Have a starter as your main meal.
 - ▶ Share a platter or meal between two.
 - ▶ Ask for a doggy bag to take uneaten food home.
 - ▶ It will always be difficult to be heard in large noisy groups, but don't be sidelined. Find a quieter table in a restaurant/bar. You still have a lot to contribute.
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Appointments

You will find that there are situations in our everyday lives that require you to bend down, lie back or lie almost flat. These might include going to the Doctor, Dentist, Hairdresser, or everyday things like gardening, washing the car or buying clothes or shoes. In all these cases and in order to speak clearly, you will need to make an appointment for a time when your stomach is nearly empty. Using aids such as pick-up sticks will stop you having to bend over unnecessarily.

“If I want to wash my car or do the lawns, then I always do them before eating. I learnt to control the reflux.” (LL)

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