

“My life is **better** than  
I ever knew it could be.”



Inspiration and practical advice on living with  
an ostomy from people who are doing it.



If you've just had ostomy surgery, we understand you may be apprehensive. Uncertain. Even frightened.

Does it help to know that **nearly half a million Americans have ostomies?** They've been where you are now. You might find it helpful to hear what they say about their ostomies.



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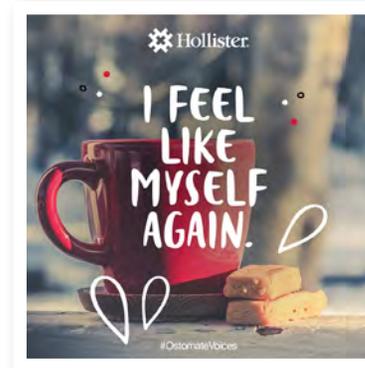
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For National Ostomy Awareness Day 2020, dozens of ostomates completed this sentence:  
*My ostomy makes it possible for me to say ...*

We turned their answers into a series of social cards that reflect a small sample of the life-affirming comments we hear every day.

[See all the cards here.](#)

Life with an ostomy may be different from your life before. But many ostomates will tell you that “different” can mean “better,” and you’ll see their outlooks reflected in this book.



How ostomates  
feel about their  
ostomies



Even if you knew you were getting an ostomy, it's a major life change. And if you had emergency surgery, this is a shock you could never have prepared for.

You may be overwhelmed with questions. Will it leak? Will it smell? Will everyone know I have a stoma? How will I ever look at myself the same way again?

Almost every ostomate has asked those same questions—and most of them have chosen to push forward, stay positive and live life to its fullest.



Will you always feel great about your ostomy?  
Of course not. It's perfectly normal to sometimes  
wish you didn't have one. You'll have good days  
and bad days. But the main point to remember is  
that you get to have *more* days.

There's no secret to loving life with an ostomy.

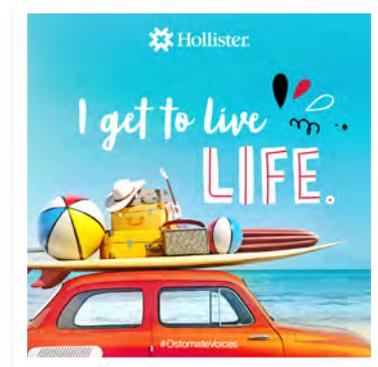
A lot of it comes down  
to gratitude.



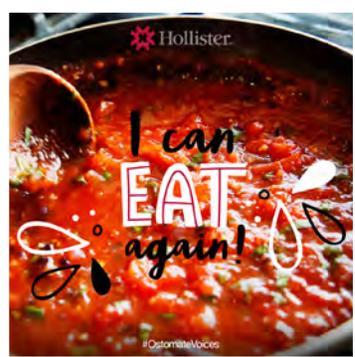
# Why ostomates are grateful

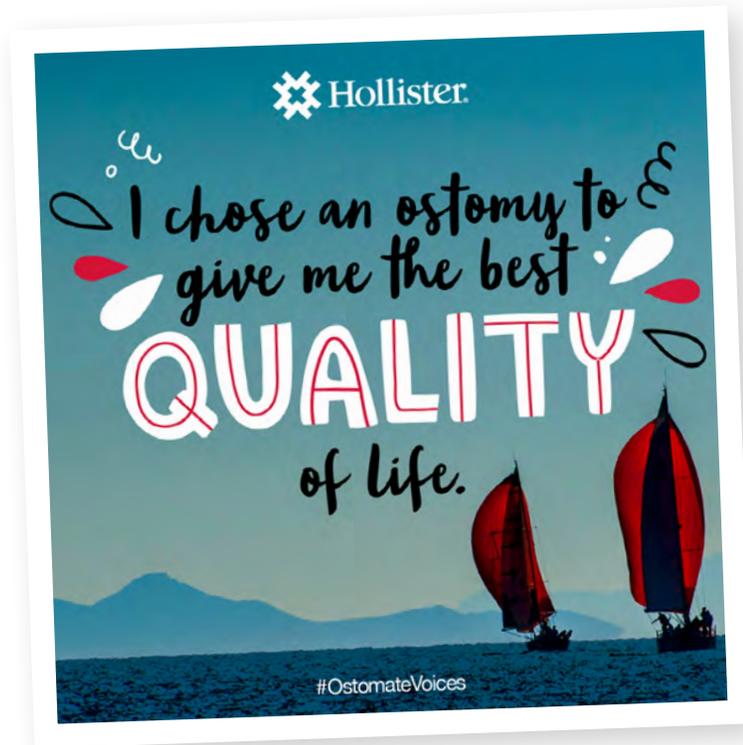


Many ostomates are overwhelmingly grateful simply to be alive!



Other ostomates point out that their ostomy has let them not just survive, but thrive. They're healthier than they were before they had an ostomy, and can enjoy things they used to do—or were never able to do.



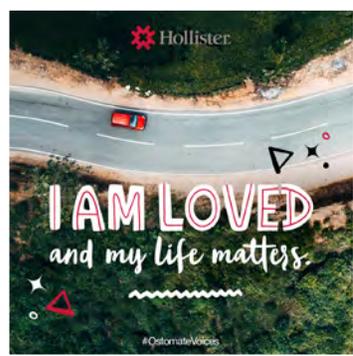


In other words, they don't just have their life—  
they have a better *quality* of life.





Ostomates often talk about the time they're now able to spend with their families, dedicate to their careers or accomplish things they may have thought they never could.



Will your ostomy let you take on new challenges and explore new dreams? That's up to you. But one thing's for sure—ostomies don't stop most ostomates from enjoying their lives.



How  
ostomates  
live life to  
its fullest



Living with an ostomy may bring you new routines, new challenges, and even a new way of life.

It may take you some time to get used to these changes, but know that it's possible to live the life you want to live—no matter what that looks like.

**Overall, ostomates can do almost anything in life. You can, too.**



## Things you may be wondering right now

Here are some questions many new ostomates have, along with answers from the experts.

### HOW AM I GOING TO TAKE A SHOWER OR BATH?

Exactly the way you did before! Soap and water won't flow into your stoma or hurt it in any way, whether your pouching system is on or off.

Now, you do want to choose a cleanser that is free from all moisturizers, oils and residue, because soap residue can sometimes interfere with how well the skin barrier sticks to your skin.

[Learn more about bathing and showering here.](#)

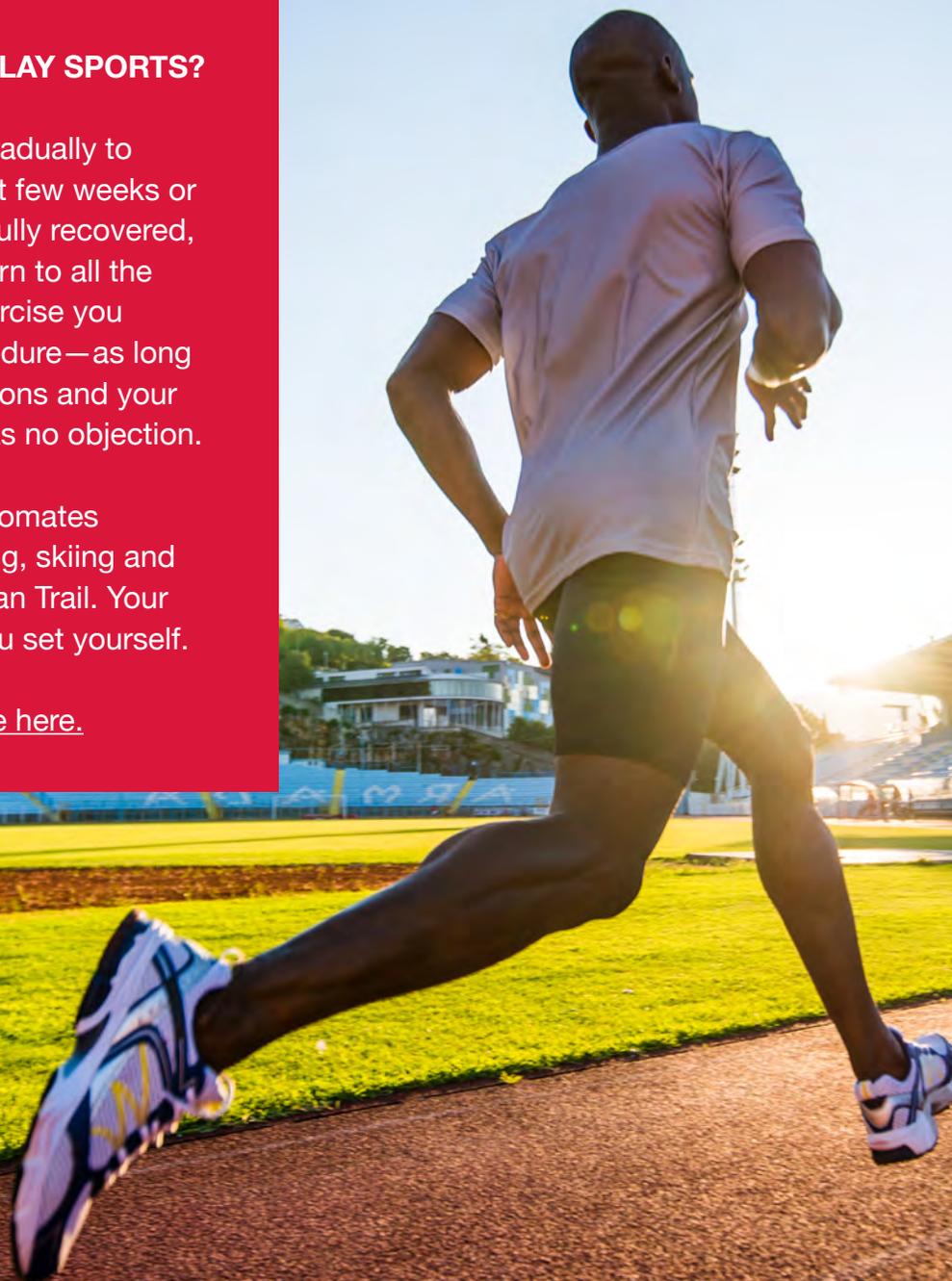


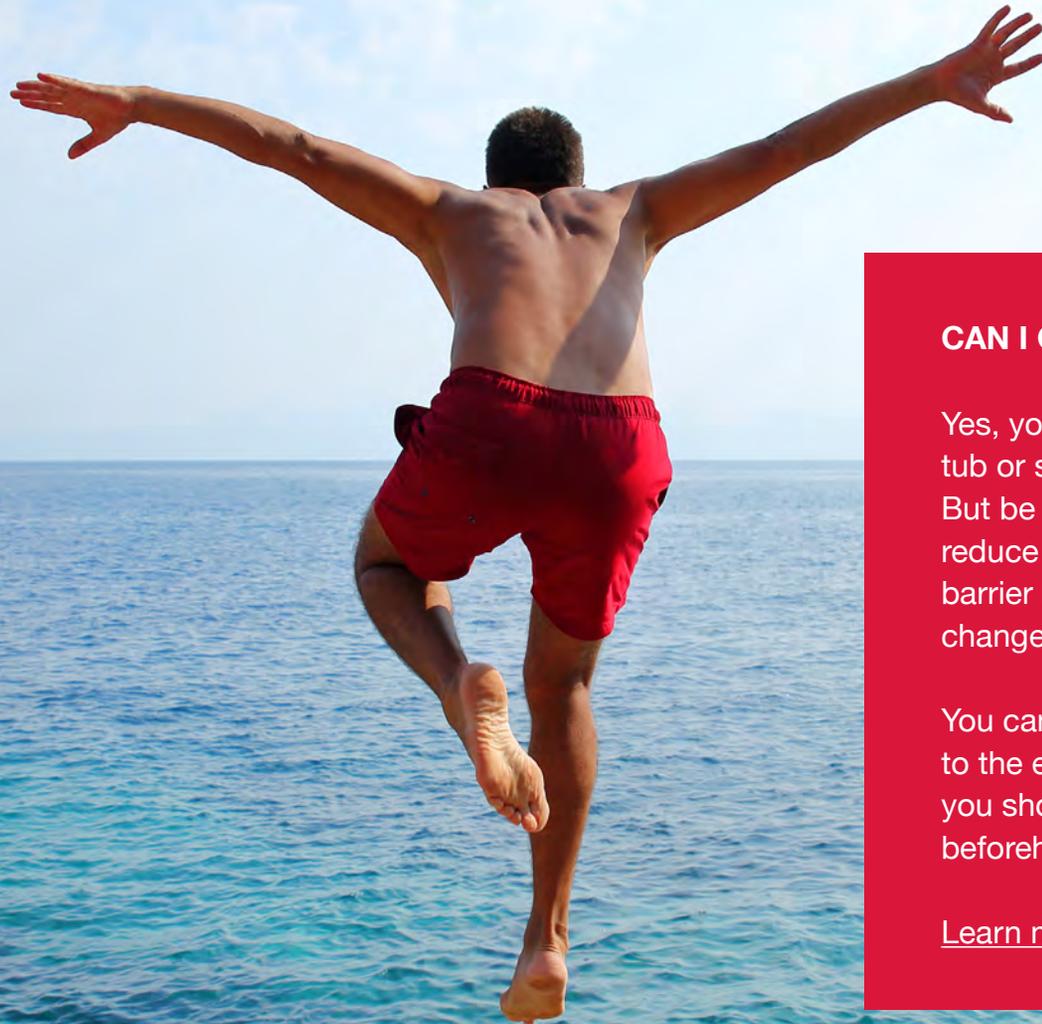
## CAN I BE ACTIVE AND PLAY SPORTS?

You may need to adjust gradually to having a stoma for the first few weeks or months. But once you're fully recovered, you should be able to return to all the physical activities and exercise you enjoyed before your procedure—as long as you have no complications and your healthcare professional has no objection.

We've heard stories of ostomates climbing mountains, surfing, skiing and even hiking the Appalachian Trail. Your only limits are the ones you set yourself.

[Learn more about exercise here.](#)





## CAN I GO SWIMMING WITH A STOMA?

Yes, you can swim—or even enjoy a hot tub or sauna—with your ostomy pouch. But be aware that heat and moisture can reduce how long you can wear your skin barrier before it fails, so you may have to change it more often.

You can always add barrier extenders to the edges of your skin barrier. And you should always empty your pouch beforehand.

[Learn more about swimming here.](#)



## HOW IS MY OSTOMY GOING TO AFFECT TRAVELING?

As long as your healthcare professional has cleared you for resuming normal activities, a stoma should not stop you from traveling anywhere in the world. You will, however, need to do a bit more planning.

For instance, to help avoid extra questions at customs and/or security checkpoints, it's a good idea to carry a [travel communication card](#) that explains your ostomy pouches, skin barriers and medications. You can also bring a letter from your healthcare professional.

Also, some airlines don't allow scissors on the aircraft, even for ostomy products. So if you use a cut-to-fit skin barrier, be sure you have several barriers cut ahead of time.

[Learn more about traveling here.](#)



### WILL I HAVE TO CHANGE WHAT I EAT?

Your stoma should not keep you from loving food. That said, everyone reacts differently to certain foods, so you should eat a variety of foods in moderation to see what works for you and what doesn't. Drink plenty of fluids, and go easy on foods known to cause diarrhea, blockages or gas.

[Learn more about diet here.](#)



## HOW WILL HAVING AN OSTOMY AFFECT MY SEX LIFE?

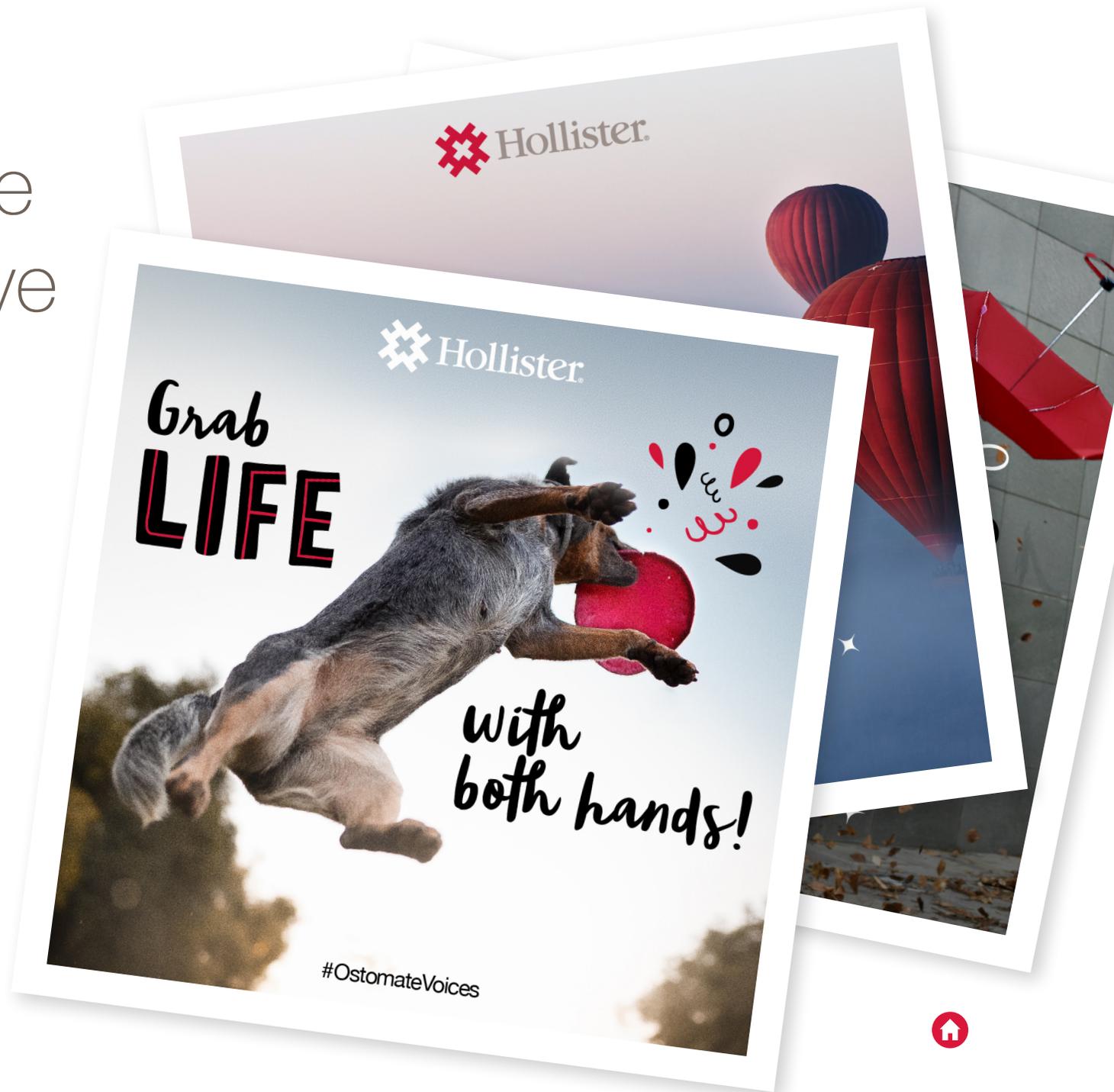
You can still have a healthy sex life after ostomy surgery, in most of the ways and positions you have always enjoyed. You're only limited by your comfort level and your imagination.

Also, your stoma should not impact your ability to become pregnant or have a healthy pregnancy. You can have a normal labor and delivery.

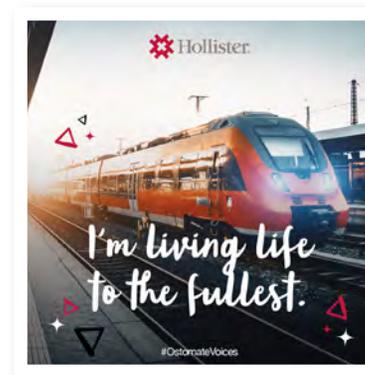
[Learn more about sex and intimacy here.](#)



# The importance of a positive outlook



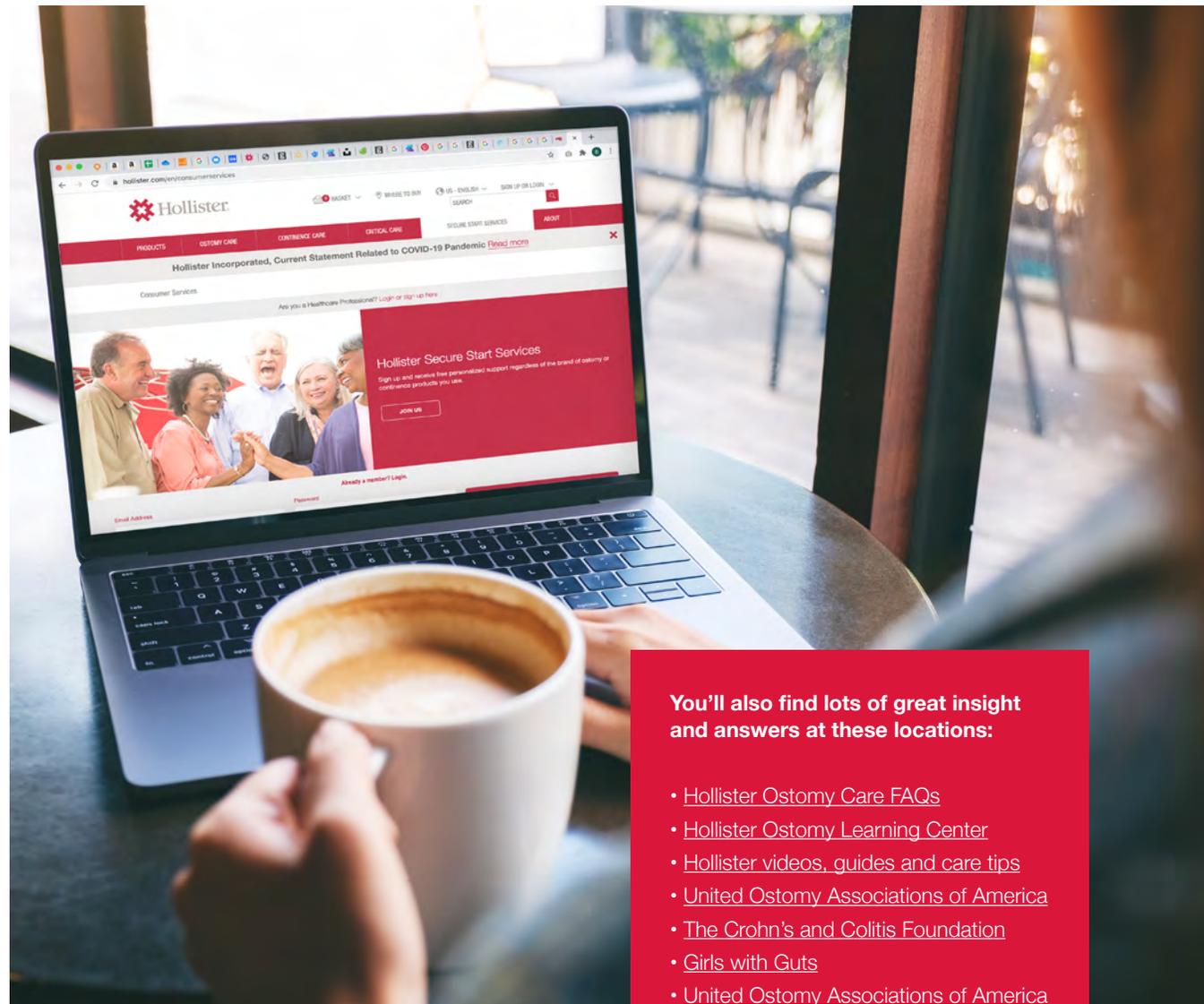
Right now, it may not feel easy to stay positive. But your ostomy can help you feel healthier, and when your body feels good, anything is possible.



# Other helpful resources

Your healthcare professional can be your primary source of information. Hollister **Secure Start** services also offer free personalized support—regardless of the brand of ostomy or continence products you use.

**For more information, visit [securestartservices.com](https://securestartservices.com) or give us a call at 888.808.7456.**



**You'll also find lots of great insight and answers at these locations:**

- [Hollister Ostomy Care FAQs](#)
- [Hollister Ostomy Learning Center](#)
- [Hollister videos, guides and care tips](#)
- [United Ostomy Associations of America](#)
- [The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation](#)
- [Girls with Guts](#)
- [United Ostomy Associations of America](#)
- [More support organizations, groups, forums and social media sites](#)





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