



## The ileostomy & internal pouch Support Group

# This is IA

### What is IA?

IA (the ileostomy and internal pouch Support Group) is a mutual support group, which has the primary aim of helping people who have had their colon removed. It was started in 1956 by a group of people with Ileostomies and some members of the medical profession. It was the first ostomy association in the UK and is a registered charity (no 234472).

Certain inflammatory diseases, e.g. ulcerative colitis, *sometimes* cause such damage to the patient's large intestine (colon) that it is necessary for the surgeon to remove it entirely. With a Brooke ileostomy, the lower end of the small intestine (ileum) is brought out through the abdominal wall and the body's waste matter is collected in an externally attached bag. Alternatively, the patient *may* be able to choose to have an internal pouch, which involves the construction of a reservoir from a section of the ileum. Someone who has a pouch does not need an external bag. It is estimated that there are more than 20,000 people in Great Britain and Ireland who have had their colon removed. This means that you will almost certainly have met someone who has an ileostomy or internal pouch, as they lead perfectly normal lives.

### What are IA's aims?

Any serious illness will disrupt a person's normal life-style, especially if it has lasted many years and has led to major surgery resulting in a change of body function and body image.

**IA aims** to help anyone who has had, or is about to have, their colon removed to return to a fully active and normal life as soon as possible

**IA aims** to help them with all aspects of their rehabilitation including social activities and relationships with their families, friends, employers, colleagues and members of the general public.

**IA aims** to work in close co-operation with the medical authorities as part of a team whose primary aim is the complete rehabilitation of every ileostomy or pouch patient.

**IA aims** to promote and co-ordinate research – not only into ways of improving the quality of life with an ileostomy or pouch, but also into the illnesses which lead to these operations.

**IA aims** to improve knowledge about the management of Ileostomies or pouches and encourage development of new ostomy equipment and skin-care preparations.

### IA activities

**Hospital and home visiting** to give confidence and encouragement by example and practical help in living after the removal of the colon. This includes the management of equipment and the prevention of skin problems.

**Members' meetings** are arranged throughout the country by IA's local groups. A medical advisor or stoma care nurse may be present to give advice if necessary and there may be a guest speaker, either on a medical subject or one of general interest.

**Equipment exhibitions** are often held at members' meetings, with manufacturers' representatives present to give advice and answer questions. Members have the opportunity to examine and compare all the alternative brands to find the ones best suited to their individual circumstances.

**The IA Journal** is published quarterly and is sent to every member free of charge. It is full of articles of interest, news and views, exchanges of correspondence and advertisements by equipment manufacturers of their latest products. Other literature is also available from National Office.

**Stoma care clinics** are now established in many hospitals throughout the country, with specialist stoma care nurses. IA members are often invited to help at these clinics and people with stomas or pouches who need help or advice may be referred to the clinics by their own doctors.

**Medical research** is carried out into the illnesses, which lead to ileostomy or pouch operations and into many aspects of life without a colon.

**Advisory services** are available on matters such as employment, housing, insurance, pensions, financial difficulties, marriage, pregnancy, sexual problems and personal relationships.

**Lectures and demonstrations** are often given by IA members to groups of doctors, surgeons and nurses to assist them in gaining more knowledge about Ileostomies or pouches for the benefit of future patients who need such operations.

### IA Organisation

It is the policy of IA that all the officers of the national executive committee, divisional and branch committees (apart from medical consultants) shall themselves have had a colectomy and have a full understanding of all that is involved in living life with an ileostomy or pouch.

There are 55 local groups throughout Great Britain and Ireland. Each group is autonomous and runs its own affairs in the light of local conditions. There is also a postal branch.

**The National Council Meeting** is the annual conference of IA. Any member can attend but voting is restricted to one delegate from each group.

**The Executive Committee** consists of national officers and elected members (including Trustees of IA) and most have a specific role. This committee is responsible, through its national secretary, for running IA's day-to-day affairs and for recommending matters of policy to the national council.

### IA Membership

**Full membership** is open to all who have had, or about to have, their colon removed by surgical procedure or who have an ileostomy.

**Associate membership** is open to anyone who has an interest in IA's work. Members may join whichever group is most convenient.

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