Problematic stomas...

Stoma Granulomas

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Granuloma is a medical term for a mass of immune cells that forms when the immune system attempts to contain foreign substances, such as suture fragments. A granuloma therefore is a type of inflammation that causes a small nodule to develop due to the macrophages (white blood cells). Macrophages specialise in the removal of bacteria and other microorganisms or of cell debris after injury. Granulomas are seen in a wide variety of medical conditions.

What causes Stoma Granulomas?
Stoma Granulomas give the appearance of small nodules of hyper granulation tissue, which are usually 2mm in size, but they can be bigger up to 10mm in size. They are friable (crumbly) and can bleed easily. They occur mainly at the muco-cutaneous junction (at the edge of the stoma between the skin and stoma mucosa) or they can occur anywhere on the surface of the stoma.

There is no definitive cause for why stoma granulomas develop but the following may give some reason to them occurring.

• These small nodules of hyper granulation tissue often develop where sutures were inserted at surgery and they can appear many years after stoma formation surgery.
• Repeated trauma from the stoma flange or pouch can also be a reason. Bleeding from stoma granulomas during your pouch change maybe due to over enthusiastic cleaning so be gentle with regards to cleaning your stoma and the surrounding skin.
• Prolonged faecal irritation to an area of the stoma or an allergic reaction to the plastic in the pouch may also be a possible cause for stoma granulomas to develop.
• Wearing tight clothing, waistbands or belts on the stoma will cause a friction force on the stoma surface, which may assist granulomas to develop.

Patient Discomfort
As mentioned stoma granulomas can cause bleeding and discomfort. Some times the bleeding can cause the stoma pouch to dislodge or, if the granulomas are large they can prevent the proper placement of the pouch over the stoma. However, not all patients who have stoma granulomas experience symptoms of bleeding and discomfort. The appearance of stoma granulomas can obviously be visually disturbing. The important thing to remember is that they are not harmful. Ask your local stoma care nurse for a review to assess the area. They will inform and reassure you about the condition and provide you with a suitable treatment plan.

Treatment & Appliances
Stoma granulomas are treated if they become painful, uncomfortable or if bleeding impairs pouch adhesion and causes leakage problems.

The treatment for stoma granulomas can be variable but the main treatment option is the application of silver nitrate to the stoma granulomas approximately two to three times a week. This cauterisation treatment can cause a reduction in the size of the stoma granulomas, as well as causing discoloration of the stoma surface.

However, stoma granulomas can frequently reoccur. Surgical removal is an option but it is usually reserved for when numerous stoma granulomas are present either at the muco-cutaneous junction or the entire surface of the stoma. The application

Regular checking of your stoma size to ensure the aperture of your pouch fits correctly is necessary, especially with any weight gain or loss. There is also some suggestion that for patients who have a parastomal hernia, the bulge caused by the parastomal hernia makes the stoma surface rub against the pouch resulting in friction force. Stomases that are short and distorted, resulting in leakage problems can also have a higher incidence of developing granulomas. Ensure clothing, such as waistbands or belts are not tight fitting over the stoma. Care must also be taken to ensure that cancerous growths or any other gastrointestinal disorder are excluded before treatment starts.

Conclusion
The causes and the treatment of stoma granulomas are not certain but your local stoma care nurse specialist, is the most experienced person to manage stoma granulomas.