

Be Free Odor-Eliminating System Offers Freedom To Ostomates

Emory University



Cynthia Timms (BSN, RN, CWOCN), a nurse at Emory Healthcare in the Wound Ostomy and Continence Nursing (WOCN) Department in Atlanta, GA, ended up with an ostomy in her twenties due to Crohn's disease. As a result of her experience of the anxiety about the smell when the ostomy is emptied, Cynthia, her spouse Greg, and her partners, Ronny Bracken and George Cavagnaro, came up with the Be Free™ odor-eliminating system.

An ostomy is an opening on the abdomen (called a stoma) that brings the intestine out through the abdominal wall, allowing waste to leave the body and collect in a disposable pouch attached to the skin. Although this is often a life-saving intervention that allows ostomates to lead healthier and more productive lives, it still comes with a cost.

“ On average, ostomates need to empty their pouch four to six times a day. However, when emptied, the ostomy pouch produces a strong and distinct smell that can attract unwanted attention. The concern for hiding the smell can lead to anxiety, depression, and other emotional distresses.

Timms recalled that she always tried to avoid her classmates at school because of that anxiety. As a result, she was determined to help herself as well as other ostomates better adjust to the lifestyle with an ostomy, and the most important step was to effectively eliminate the disturbing odor.

Although there are liquid deodorizers on the market today, their effects are usually short-lived, and they are inconvenient to use. Ostomates must reapply them many times throughout the day, forcing them to carry liquid deodorizers wherever they go.

The Be Free system consists of an absorbent pod impregnated with a deodorant. The pod is suspended in the pouch by way of a plastic tail, which is held in place by the pouch's adhesive barrier, allowing it to remain in use for as long as the ostomate wears the pouch. The pod's odor elimination properties are further enhanced by the application of the team's liquid deodorant twice daily, or as needed. It also eliminates the need for ostomates to carry deodorants everywhere.

Timms is the biggest user of the Be Free™ system, as well as its biggest beneficiary. She no longer avoids people at work or in social situations and is eager to share the liberation she has achieved with others.

"It's been a process coming from being really afraid to empty my pouch in public to now, thirty years later, having a solution for that and wanting to share my solution with everybody," Timms said.

The Emory University Tech Transfer Office funded the refinement of the technology's design through its proof-of-concept fund. The office also worked with the inventor to secure funding from the state organization Georgia Research Alliance. Finally, the office has supported her in the creation of a start-up company for this technology.

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