


Travel Advice



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A photograph of a person driving a convertible car at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The driver's arm is visible, wearing a watch, and the car's interior and exterior are visible. The background shows a field of tall grass.

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Holidays should be enjoyed. Taking a little time to plan will help ensure that yours will be as trouble free as possible. Most stoma supply delivery companies offer travel assistance, so you have the added peace of mind that you won't get stranded abroad without supplies.

TRAVELLING ABROAD

Once you have chosen your holiday destination, make an appointment to visit the practice nurse at your GP's surgery. They will be able to give you the most up to date information available about vaccinations or antimalarial treatment requested by the country or countries you will be visiting.

You will need to do this about two months before your holiday in case you need to have more than one course of vaccinations.

Most surgeries will also provide printed information about appropriate sunscreens, the situation regarding local drinking water and other useful travel information.

Travel Insurance

When booking your holiday, you must ensure that you obtain adequate travel insurance, remembering to declare any pre-existing medical conditions. Before insurers will provide you with cover, they will require information about all medical events which could affect you in the future.

Pre-existing Medical Conditions

If you have a stoma, are undergoing a course of chemotherapy or radiotherapy, have had surgery, or are on medication for any other reason, you will be judged to have a pre-existing medical condition. Before insurers will provide you with adequate insurance cover, they will require information about all medical events which could affect you in the future. They may impose conditions which may include any of the following:

- 1. You must obtain written medical approval to undertake the journey if you have been in hospital at any time during the previous six months.**
- 2. You must not travel against medical advice, or specifically to get medical treatment.**
- 3. You must not have received a terminal prognosis.**
- 4. You must not be on a waiting list for hospital treatment.**

You will have to go through your insurers screening process. This may involve either a telephone conversation with their approved medical advisor, or you could be asked to complete a medical questionnaire. Whatever form the screening process takes, you must disclose any pre-existing medical conditions. If you fail to do this, your insurer is within their rights to refuse to pay out on any claims you may make. If this were to happen you could be faced with paying a very large medical bill. If an insurer agrees to cover your pre-existing conditions, we strongly advise you to get written confirmation of this offer. If you don't and a dispute arises as to whether you disclosed any pre-existing medical conditions, you may have difficulty in pursuing your claim.

Travel Insurance

It is advisable to get quotes from several companies to compare content and level of cover. Wherever you obtain your travel insurance, make sure the cover is both suitable and adequate for your personal needs.

Helpful stoma charities that provide travel insurance information

Colostomy UK - www.colostomyuk.org

IA (the Ileostomy and internal pouch support group) - www.iasupport.org

Urostomy Association - www.urostomyassociation.org.uk





European Health Insurance Card

If you are travelling to a country in the European Economic Area (EEA), or in Switzerland, make sure you obtain a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in addition to your private health insurance. This is free of charge. If you have an accident or fall ill abroad, this card will entitle you to free or reduced cost medical treatment in most European member states.

Anyone over the age of 16 can apply for an EHIC card.
For further information:
www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC

(Information correct at time of going to press March 2019)

What to pack?

Your stoma nurse can advise what you should take away with you. There is a lot of advice available on the stoma charities website.

Always check in advance with the airline/airport for their current rules on the size of cabin baggage allowed, liquids and sharp objects.



Tips

- Pack double the amount of pouches you would normally use as hot weather may lead to more frequent pouch changes.
- Include smaller pouches for swimming and bathing.
- Remember that your ostomy supplier may need a couple of weeks to deliver your supplies so order them in plenty of time.
- If you need to carry any liquids in your hand luggage (including gels, pastes, lotions, liquid solid mixtures and pressurized containers) these should be carried in a single, transparent, re-sealable plastic bag. The plastic bag will need to be taken out of other hand luggage to be screened separately.
- Carry spare pre-cut pouches with you in your hand luggage, in case of emergency and/or flight delays. Depending on the length of flight you may want to take a change of clothes in your hand luggage.
- Most airlines offer a free extra luggage weight allowance of 5kg – contact Special Assistance before you travel.
- It is advisable to take with you a note of your product/s name/s and product code/s (found on your prescription), as well as the telephone number of your stoma supply company.
- Take a small day bag of supplies in your hand luggage which can be removed from your hand luggage should you need it during your flight.



TRAVELLING BY AIR

Body Screening at Airports

Body scanners are designed to enable airport staff to detect explosives or other harmful items which may be hidden on a traveller's body. The scan does not show internal body parts but is likely to highlight the fact that you are wearing a stoma pouch. Security officers have received training to deal with this in an appropriate and sensitive manner. It is recommended that you carry a travel certificate with you at all times. You can show this to the security staff to describe your condition, should it be required. It may also be useful to carry a letter from your GP. Travel certificates/cards can be obtained from your stoma care nurse, the Ileostomy Association (IA), Colostomy UK (CUK) or Urostomy Association (UA). These are printed in several languages and briefly explain your condition and the equipment you are carrying.



Tips

- Many airports offer a special assistance service with a dedicated team who can help with individual requirements. Further information about this can be found on the airport website.
- Try and have an empty pouch going through the scanner.
- If you are stopped at security you can ask them to search your bag in private, explaining that you have medical supplies in there.

Medicines

If you need to take any prescription medicines on holiday with you, it is a good idea to find out whether there are any restrictions on taking them in and out of the country you will be visiting. Medicines which are readily available over the counter in the UK may be controlled drugs in other countries. Always carry your medicines in correctly labelled pharmacy issued containers.

If you are taking strong pain-relieving medicine, it is recommended to obtain a letter from your GP explaining why you need to carry this. Your GP may charge you for this service.

Medical alert ID bracelets

When travelling either at home or abroad, you may decide to wear a MedicAlert ID bracelet as an added safety precaution. These bracelets have a small built in compartment which can hold vital written information about your medical or surgical condition. This would be extremely helpful should you be involved in an accident which rendered you incapable of communicating with the medical staff trying to treat you. Information about MedicAlert ID bracelets is available from either your GP, pharmacist or visit: www.medicalert.org.uk for more information.



Air Travel and wind

Air travel tends to make everyone a bit 'windy'. It's difficult to know whether this is due to altitude, a change in normal eating patterns caused by early morning or late-night flights, or not being able to exercise for several hours whilst in the air. It's a good idea to have more frequent and smaller meals or snacks for the 24 hours before you fly, and also try to avoid highly spiced or fried and fatty foods.

Some people recommend that you should avoid fizzy drinks before and during the flight.



Tips

- Obtain a signed travel certificate from your stoma nurse. This explains that you are wearing a pouch and is useful to have if you're asked.
- It is a good idea to get a few key phrases translated and have these to hand e.g. 'where is the nearest hospital?'
- Scissors are only allowed in checked-in luggage so cut your pouches before packing.
- If possible, book an aisle seat which will allow for easier access to the toilet if required.
- The day before you travel avoid any food and drinks which might cause upset or excessive wind.
- For comfort, wear loose fitting clothes.
- Check in early, this will enable you to get prepared for your journey.
- Place the seat belt below or above your stoma for greater comfort.
- Drink plenty of fluids, be careful with alcohol and avoid fizzy drinks.



Pouch Storage

If you are holidaying in hot or humid conditions, you may wish to take a cool bag with you to protect your pouches. Store your pouches in the coolest part of your holiday accommodation and out of direct sunlight.

Pouch Adhesion

In warmer and more humid climates you are more likely to perspire more than usual which may affect baseplate adhesion and you may have to change your pouch more frequently.

Pouch Disposal

You can empty the contents of your pouch down the toilet. You can dispose of your pouch in the bin in the bathroom of your accommodation as you would do at home. You can double bag the full bag before putting it in the bathroom bin. There are other alternatives such as a pouch with a flushable inner liner or the use of a drainable bag whilst away from home however this type of disposal will very much depend on the country you are visiting. Your stoma nurse can give you advice as to which alternatives are best for you.



Tips

- Make sure your skin is as dry as possible.
- Apply a simple non-scented roll on antiperspirant before applying your base plate.
- Talk to your stoma nurse who will be able to offer advice on supporting products to help with adhesion.



- One of the great things about travelling to different countries is trying different cuisines. However, a few sensible precautions may help to prevent an upset tummy.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

In very hot countries avoid food that has been standing for long periods of time, in particular, shellfish. Wash salad and fruit before eating and drink only bottled water. If the local water upsets you then you should also use bottled water to clean around your stoma. Avoid ice cubes and drink only moderate amounts of alcohol.

It is advisable to drink a glass of water for every glass of alcohol you consume as excessive amounts of alcohol will cause dehydration.

Dehydration

Dehydration does not only occur with tummy upsets and tummy bugs. In hot and humid conditions, we perspire much more, and we need to replace lost body fluids by drinking more. This applies to all the family, so make sure to have plenty of fluid stops and always carry a bottle of water with you. Isotonic sports drinks such as Lucozade Sport or its equivalent are available at most supermarkets and pharmacies and are excellent at combating dehydration.

Symptoms of dehydration are headache, thirst, dizziness, small amounts of dark urine, feeling light headed or weak, or any combination of these symptoms. If dehydration persists seek medical help immediately.



Glamping with an Ostomy - Louise's story

Glamping with an ostomy was a first for me. When I booked this and revealed all to my best friend, her response was to roll around laughing as I am not known for my at one with nature attitude. I am a girl that likes her toilet facilities nearby and creature comforts of heating and not having to cook.

I like to plan things. I can't help it. The things you must make sure you pack i.e. stoma supplies for just in case, can be mind boggling and tedious. Last year when my stoma was only 7 months old my partner Ben decided to treat us to a surprise trip to Bruges. I had what can only be described as an epic melt down because a hotel hadn't been booked and I was in a strange country without knowing where the toilets were with a rather high output stoma. So when he suggested sleeping in the car I had a massive tantrum (childish yes) but I was so worried about having an accident in the leased car that I cried a fair amount of tears.

So, glamping for me was a massive step out of my comfort zone but, one I decided to embrace and let my wing life attitude take hold.

I loved the experience even though the weather was not my friend that weekend. We left Kent and it was in the high twenties. We got to Wales and we were greeted with rain and gale-force winds. Lighting the BBQ Saturday night was an experience and a half but thanks to some clever thinking and a rather big roll of tin foil we managed to cook in what can only be described as a force 10 Hurricane at the time.

The one scary moment for me was the early hours of Saturday morning. I average 2 toilet visits due to my output in the night, being half asleep I convinced myself that someone was in the toilet with me and following me back to the pod. Apologies to anyone who saw a grown woman in super girl pyjamas looking like she was running the 100 metres at 3am but I have a habit of managing to freak myself out.

Louise Potter is an ostomate with a permanent Ileostomy. Louise blogs about life with IBD and a stoma at **Crohnsfighting.com** and on Twitter **@crohnsfighting**. She is also one of the co-founders of The IBD & Ostomy support show on YouTube.

Overall it was a great experience and one I hope to repeat with my daughter as she will love it.



Useful Contacts

Colostomy UK

Email: info@colostomyuk.org

Tel: 0800 328 4257

www.colostomyuk.org

Ileostomy Association

(Ileostomy and internal pouch support group)

Email: info@iasupport.org

Tel: 0800 0184 724

www.iasupport.org

Urostomy Association

Email: secretary.ua@classmail.co.uk

Tel: 01386 430140

www.urostomyassociation.org.uk

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