



Living with a Stoma: Travel



Ostomy Care
Healthy skin. Positive outcomes.



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A glossary is included at the back of this booklet to help with terms you may not be familiar with.

Before your stoma surgery, your life may have included travelling. This booklet can help you take the steps to enjoy a worry-free trip. The key is planning. If you plan and organise ahead of time, you can be sure you are prepared for the new situations you will encounter.

As you read and take note of the information and tips included here, you can anticipate travelling to a country you've always dreamed of, and resuming your regular travel plans near and far.



Getting prepared to travel

There is no reason why having a stoma should stop you from travelling anywhere in the world.

Many people with a stoma, particularly soon after the operation, can experience stress at the prospect of even the shortest journey. For example, they worry about not having access to a clean place to change a pouch, running out of or misplacing pouches or sleeping in an unfamiliar bedroom.

The following are general guidelines for things to consider before starting to travel. Of course, your requirements are specific to your situation and will depend on your unique preferences.

General travel guidelines

It is only natural to feel apprehensive about travelling for the first time after your operation. You might want to start with short trips away from home to build up your confidence. Once reassured that your pouching system stays secure during normal day-to-day activities, you can start to venture farther.

A few days, or even weeks before departure, prepare a checklist of things to take with you. Keep track of your daily routine of pouch changes to remind yourself exactly what you need and use — pouches, skin barriers, pouching accessories, disposal bags and so on. Don't forget to take along different pouch lengths (if applicable) — perhaps a smaller one for sports activities or a bigger pouch for longer periods when pouch changes may be delayed.

Count the number of pouch changes you normally need to make, then double that number to make sure you have plenty of supplies and pouches on hand. That way, you will be ready for the unexpected — a delay in returning home, lost pouches, or changes in climate and environment that call for more pouch changes than usual.

In the event that you do need additional supplies while travelling, most manufacturers have products available around the world. Before you leave home, check to see where you can purchase or obtain new supplies in the areas where you plan to travel. The national associations will be able to give you contacts of suppliers and manufacturers abroad.

TIP

Calculate how many pouches you would normally need, then double that number to ensure you're prepared while on the go.

Travel documents

When travelling abroad, you will naturally make sure that you have important papers such as a passport, tickets, visas, etc. You may need to check with your travel agent or holiday company regarding any other requirements.

Other documents may also come in handy. A travel communication card is available from your stoma care nurse or Hollister customer services and will help explain what your pouches, skin barriers, and medications are for, to help avoid extra questions at customs and/or security check points. The certificates are available in a variety of languages, which may be helpful should more supplies be required or medical recommendations needed while travelling abroad. It's also a good idea to have a letter from your healthcare professional explaining your medical condition.



You may also choose to purchase travel insurance to cover loss of luggage or money as well as cancellations. Carefully check the insurance policy for guidelines around age limits or pre-existing medical conditions. If you are in doubt about whether you are fully covered, check with your insurance or travel agent.

Before you leave, find out how to obtain medical aid abroad and have emergency contacts available.

Last-minute arrangements

You may be tempted to reduce the flow from your stoma while travelling by changing your regular eating or drinking routine. However, it is generally not recommended to vary your eating and drinking habits.

Some people find that changing their pouch before departure gives confidence and maximum security from the possibility of leaks.

Air and road travel

Here are a few tips to make sure you are comfortable and prepared when you fly or take a trip by car, plane, or train.

Weight limits

If you are travelling by air with a lot of supplies, check with the airline for the luggage weight allowance. Some airlines may offer special allowances for medical supplies.

Forbidden items

Remember that International Air Transport Association (IATA) regulations forbid dangerous items on board. For example, ether, methylated spirits, or flammable aerosol adhesives and removers are not allowed because of a fire hazard. Scissors may not be allowed, so check with your airline or pre-cut your barriers before travelling.

Pre-boarding security checks

Your carry-on luggage will be inspected at the security baggage check before boarding the aircraft. If you have any medications with you, have your healthcare professional prepare a card explaining that they are medical supplies. Some countries do not allow certain medications, such as codeine, to cross their borders, and you should check in advance any restrictions that may be in place.

You may be searched before boarding the aircraft, so be prepared to explain about your stoma. Travel cards for this are available from your stoma care nurse and Hollister customer services on 0800 521 377.

Using airplane toilets

During a long flight, there are times when many people want to use the toilet, perhaps after a meal. Keep your eyes open for a chance to use the toilet when most people are in their seats. You may want to request a seat that has easy access to the toilet.

Car travel

Your car seat belt should sit across your hip bone and pelvis, not your abdomen and stoma. If you want to give your stoma extra protection from the strap, car accessory shops carry products that make seat belts more comfortable. An extension bracket can be fitted to lower the angle at which the belt crosses the body.

Special considerations for your stoma type

Depending on the type of surgery you have had, there may be additional ways to make sure you are comfortable and prepared.

Carefully maintain skin care around the stoma, especially in warm weather. If you begin to feel ill, do not wait to see your healthcare professional or stoma care nurse.

If you have an ileostomy

In hot climates, dehydration can be a problem. It is important to drink plenty of fluids to remain well hydrated.

Maintaining your stool consistency is important, please speak with your stoma care nurse or healthcare professional before travelling.

If you have a colostomy

A change in cabin pressure on a plane or change in diet can create gas for anyone. But it can be a particular problem for people with a colostomy. Avoid obvious things such as carbonated drinks, eating too quickly, foods that you know cause gas, or anything that causes you to swallow air.

You can also use a pouch with a filter, which has a small vent that slowly deodorises gas, absorbs odour and releases the gas from the pouch.

If you have a urostomy

If you will be in a hot climate, be sure to drink plenty of fluids to maintain your usual urine production so you are always flushing out your system.

Consider taking an overnight drainage bag or leg bag with you. This can be especially useful when you have extended periods between pouch emptying.

TIP

If flying, you can consider taking your supplies in your hand luggage, with a small travel kit for a pouch change to make visits to the toilet simple and discreet.



Travelling with pouches and supplies

Once you have prepared a travel checklist, packing equipment and pouches should be easy.

When you are at home, you probably keep most of your pouches and supplies together. For travel, you might want to consider dividing the items you will need and keep some in your carry-on bag. Put the rest in the luggage that you check with the airline or in the baggage of a travelling companion. That way, if one of the bags is lost, you still have supplies available in the other.

Your short-term needs should go in your carry-on luggage so they can remain with you at all times and are within easy reach. A separate, small travel kit containing items needed for a change of pouch should be kept in your carry-on luggage to make visits to the toilet simple and discreet.

Some airlines may not allow scissors on board the aircraft, even for stoma products. So if you use a cut-to-fit product, be sure you have enough pre-cut skin barriers on hand before reaching your destination. You can pack your scissors in your checked luggage. Check with your airline and current regulations.

Storage of stoma products

Storage of stoma products is also important. They should not get too warm while in transit. When travelling by car, especially in warm and humid climates, do not keep supplies in the trunk or glove compartment. These are often the hottest spots in the vehicle. A coolbag may be a useful container to transport your pouches.

Most manufacturers provide guidelines for storage of stoma products. This is especially useful when staying in hot climate locations. Bathrooms are often coolest and, as long as they are not too steamy, are probably the best places to keep your products.

Disposal

Disposal of used stoma pouches should not be difficult if you make proper preparations. Before changing your pouch, check that the sink is not in a separate room from the toilet and that a means to dispose of the pouch is available.

Make sure your travel kit contains disposal bags and dry wipes that your dispenser provides. Disposal bags that come pleasantly scented or storage or freezer bags make disposal of used pouches simple and discreet. Carry cleansing wipes for emergency situations, only when you may not have access to water, to clean up any accidental mess.

Overnight stays at hotels and homes

Staying overnight — whether at a friend's or family member's home, a hotel in your own country, or abroad — need not be a cause for concern or worry.

At home, everything you need is available and you can expect privacy. With good planning, you can have everything you need neatly packed in your travel kit.

If you are staying in the home of friends or family who may not be aware of your special needs, you may be surprised at how understanding they can be. If you wish to explain briefly about your stoma, and if possible, try to not use the bathroom when you might end up being rushed.



Before staying in a hotel at home or abroad, try to make sure you have a bathroom en-suite or attached to your room. That way, pouch changes can be made easily in private and at your leisure, at a time convenient for you.



Recommendations for food, drink and clothing

Food and drink

While travelling internationally, general recommendations on food and drink are the same for anyone. If in doubt about the quality of the water supply, buy bottled water for drinking and cleaning teeth. You should also use bottled water if you irrigate your colostomy.

Likewise, eating foods that have been well-cooked or washed in clean water, or come from a reliable source is important for everyone. Be aware of the possibility of becoming dehydrated in hot climates.

Any change of water, climate or food can upset a person's bowels, so be prepared. You may want to pack some antidiarrheal medications or rehydration salts just as a precaution. Antidiarrheal medications are available without a prescription from your pharmacist, and if taken at the first signs of diarrhoea, will usually prevent the problem from continuing. Be sure to discuss all medications with your healthcare professional.

Diarrhoea, particularly if accompanied by a fever and vomiting, may also lead to a shortage of salt in the body. The difficulty is knowing how much salt needs replacing. Don't take salt on its own, always add it to your food. If your diarrhoea persists for 24 hours, seek medical help.

Dehydration

In hot climates, as chances of dehydrating increase, people with stomas should drink more fluids — preferably water. A sign of being dehydrated is the production of less urine than usual.

Special rehydrating solutions, such as sports drinks, can be useful for severe cases of dehydration and are readily available. However, commercial sports drinks also contain varying amounts of salt and sugar therefore please consult with your stoma care nurse.

If you have antidiarrheal medication with you and watch what you eat and drink, you can enjoy the local delights; but be sensible and avoid excess. Also remember: too much alcohol will accelerate dehydration, so don't overdo it.

Feeling confident

When you are on a holiday or vacation, you want to relax and enjoy yourself. Part of this is to be able to wear what you like.

With a stoma, there are very few restrictions on clothing. Just be careful to avoid especially tight clothing that may restrict the flow of body waste into your pouch.

There is no reason why people with a stoma cannot enjoy the beach or a pool. Depending on the position of your stoma, you may select a style of swimwear that makes you most comfortable.

Some people select a bold-patterned swimsuit that helps distract from any bulges that may be caused by the pouch. Some also find beach wraps and throws useful over their swimsuit.

If you can't find a swimsuit that you like, there are special suppliers that make bathing suits for special needs. Your stoma care nurse can also help you find the right resources.



Enjoying fitness activities and sports

Stoma surgery is a major operation that should not be underestimated. The first few weeks or even months may be a struggle as you gradually adjust.

As long as you have no complications and your healthcare professional has no objection, you can enjoy any kind of sporting activity at home or while you are travelling. Contact sports and those that involve a lot of bending, such as bowling and aerobics, are possible.

If you would like to talk to someone about a particular sport, contact your stoma care nurse or national association groups. They may be able to put you in touch with someone who is currently enjoying your sport and can give you some practical recommendations.

The most important thing to remember is to plan ahead. If you do, your stoma will not stand in the way of your enjoyment of travel.

Resources and Organisations

Your healthcare professional and your stoma care nurse will be very important resources for you in the days ahead. You also have ongoing access to online information, or printed educational materials, at www.hollister.co.uk/en-gb/ostomycare/educationaltools such as:

- **The “Understanding Your Stoma” Booklet Series**
Provides information on lifestyle-related topics such as diet, travel, sports, and fitness
- **“Caring for Your Loved One with a Stoma” Booklet**
Provides information and support for your loved one(s), in helping you live life to the fullest after stoma surgery
- **“Routine Care of Your Stoma” Care Tip**
Provides information on how to care for a stoma
- **“Stoma Educational Theatre” Video Modules**
Provides an overview of stoma products, helping you to choose the products that are right for you and learn how to use them
- **“Living with a Stoma” Video Modules**
Provides insights from other people who have been through stoma surgery on how to lead full and productive lives

Stoma support groups are also available to individuals who have had stoma surgery. Here, you are able to interact with people who are facing many of the same challenges that you are. The ability to discuss issues with someone who understands what you are experiencing can be very beneficial.

Urostomy Association



Tel: 01386 430140

Email: info@urostomyassociation.org.uk

Web: www.urostomyassociation.org.uk

Colostomy UK



Admin line: 0118 939 1537

24 hour Helpline: 0800 328 4257

(Practical and emotional support)

Email: info@ColostomyUk.org

Web: www.colostomyuk.org

Ileostomy Association



Freephone: 0800 018 4724

Email: info@iasupport.org

Web: www.iasupport.org

Ileostomy & Internal Pouch
Association

Glossary

Codeine

Medicine generally used for pain relief but can also be used to slow and thicken stoma output. In some countries, this medication is illegal in any form without a prescription. Check before you travel.

Colon

Another term for the large intestine or last portion of the gastrointestinal tract.

Colostomy

A stoma (surgical opening) created in the colon; part of the large intestine or colon.

Dehydration

A loss of too much water from the body.

Diarrhoea

Loose water-like faecal output from the stoma that is more so than usual.

Ileostomy

A stoma (surgical opening) created in the small intestine.

Infectious

Can be spread from one person to the next; also “contagious.”

Peristomal Skin

The area around the stoma starting at the skin/stoma junction and extending outward to the area covered by the pouching system.

Pouch

The bag that collects output from the stoma.

Skin Barrier

The portion of your pouching system that fits immediately around your stoma. It protects your skin and holds the pouching system in place.

Stoma

A surgically created opening in the gastrointestinal or urinary tract. Also known as an ostomy.

Stool

Waste material from the bowel. Also known as a bowel movement.

Urostomy

A stoma (surgical opening) created to divert urine.

Wear time

The length of time a pouching system can be worn. Wear times can vary but should be fairly consistent for each person.

For more information or for **FREE** samples, contact us on:

UK: 0800 521 377

email: samples.uk@hollister.com

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