



HOLIDAYS!



Travel Advice for the ostomist

When you come home and are convalescing after your operation you may not feel like doing anything and probably can't imagine doing anything much that's normal again. However as time goes by and you start adjusting to life with a stoma then you may well feel like traveling again.

Unless there are other reasons for not going abroad having a stoma should not affect your travel plans, you just need to be organized! It is prudent to check with your doctor that it is safe for you to travel following recent surgery. Make sure you take form E111, you can apply for these from Social Security and Post Offices. It will enable you to obtain free medical cover in all EEC countries. It is still advisable to take out separate insurance cover and always check it covers pre-existing conditions such as the stoma – make sure you check with your travel company.

You may also need a letter from your nurse regarding the equipment you would need to take with you. The Ileostomy Association has a special insurance scheme to cover holidays abroad.

Travel Kit

When deciding how many appliances you need to take away work out how many you usually use in the time frame and then double that number. It is better to have too many than too few as you are then prepared for any eventualities! If you are going somewhere hot it is worth putting your equipment in a cool bag (the soft kind) and then you can keep everything together and take it on the plane as hand luggage. Before you go check with the airline about extra hand luggage for your travel kit – always take the kit with you on board, in case your luggage in the hold gets 'lost!' Your travel kit should contain:

- ✦ spare appliances
- ✦ any skin prep etc you normally use
- ✦ small amount of water in a plastic bottle for cleaning
- ✦ kitchen roll or wipes
- ✦ a small plastic bowl
- ✦ small nappy sacks

baby/hand wipes

Once on the plane and in the air your bag may balloon a little with wind. This is due to the change in cabin pressure so do not think you've eaten something you shouldn't have. Provided there is a filter on your bag this shouldn't be a major problem. To try and ease the situation you can watch your diet for a few days before the flight and try to avoid fizzy drinks during the flight.

Your stoma maybe a bit erratic for the first few days as you get used to different food but this should settle down.

On the Beach / in the Pool



Swim wear can be a problem, but a couple of companies including White Rose make swim wear which will cover the appliance (make sure the appliance is emptied prior to you entering the pool). Costumes with patterns on may help to disguise the outline of the appliance. Frequent dips in the water and hot weather could affect the adhesion of the appliance, making it necessary to be changed more often than normal, so make sure you take extra supplies with you. If you are going abroad it would be advisable to check with your travel agent regarding specific swimming pool regulations. For example, some areas in France only allow a certain type of swim wear in their swimming pools.

It is important to remember that most public swimming pools now do not allow babies in the pool with nappies on. So if your child has had a 'pull through' and is not toilet trained, you will need to obtain a special 'nappy' reusable swimming costume. A number of companies now make these.

It is important to remember that you may need an increased fluid intake in hot weather, particularly if they have an ileostomy. Your Stoma Care nurse or doctor will be able to advise you what to do if you develop sickness or diarrhea and how to ensure salts and water are replaced. If you are going to a country with an unreliable water supply it is worth sticking to bottled water, even to clean your teeth. Also avoid ice cubes if you can. Taking anti diarrhea medication with you is worth it.

Local Support

If you are going on holiday in any part of the UK it may be possible for the Stoma Care Nurse to link in with the Stoma Care Nurse in the area where you are to be staying. This can be reassuring if you predict you may have problems whilst you are away. In some instances, if you are going away for an extended length of time it may be possible for arrangements to be made for your supplies to be delivered directly to your holiday accommodation.

The following is a sample of the type of letter that is useful to obtain from your Stoma Care Nurse or Doctor for when you are traveling;

To whom it may concern,

_____ has a condition that requires a colostomy/ileostomy/urostomy. This is an opening on the surface of the abdomen from the large/small intestine, which allows the body to eliminate faeces/urine because _____ is unable to do so normally. The opening or stoma is covered by a pouch (appliance) that serves as a container for waste until it can be emptied. The enclosed is a list of equipment that is needed by _____ to change the appliance when necessary. For further information please contact

