

Supporting and empowering you



Travel Advice

Having a colostomy should not prevent you from travelling at home or abroad

www.ColostomyUK.org



Freephone helpline:

0800 328 4257



Colostomy UK

We are Colostomy UK. Here if you have questions, need support or just want to talk to someone who lives with a stoma.

Your voice on the bigger issues: advocates for your rights and campaigning to raise awareness of what matters to you; running projects to empower you; building communities to support you.

It is normal to feel anxious about spending time away from home when you have a stoma. Especially if your surgery was recent you might be lacking in confidence and concerned about how you will cope. If you identify with such feelings then this booklet is for you. At Colostomy UK our aim is to empower you in all aspects of life, and that includes going on holiday. In the pages that follow you will find lots of practical advice and tips, all of which are aimed at getting you travelling again, whether this be in the UK or further afield.

Contact us

Write to:

Colostomy UK
Enterprise House
95 London Street
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 4QA

General enquiries:

Tel: 0118 939 1537

24-hour free helpline:

0800 328 4257

E-mail

info@ColostomyUK.org

Website:

www.ColostomyUK.org



www.facebook.com/colostomyuk



[@ColostomyUK](https://twitter.com/ColostomyUK)



Contents

Travelling in the UK	4
Travelling Abroad	6
Bon Voyage	12
How to help yourself	13
Travel Check List	14
Frequently Asked Questions	15
Useful Information	16
Clothing Specialists	17
Support from Colostomy UK	18

Travelling in the UK

Having a colostomy shouldn't prevent you from travelling. The important thing is to plan ahead and be prepared. Take plenty of supplies and always make sure that you carry an emergency travel kit in case you need to change your bag away from home.

Disposal

Bag disposal is a common concern. A bag with a flushable inner liner is one answer. If you are not able to wear a flushable appliance, then there are other options.

You could empty the contents of your bag down the toilet. Alternatively, you could consider 'double bagging' the full bag before putting it in the bathroom bin.

Some people prefer to use a drainable bag when they are away from home. These don't need to be changed as often, but you will still have to deal with its disposal at some point.

Accessible toilets and National Key Scheme (NKS) – RADAR Key

NKS offers access to locked accessible public toilets around the country. Toilets fitted with NKS locks can be found in shopping centres, pubs, cafés, department stores, bus and train stations and many other locations across the country. If you are out and about in the UK a RADAR key can open the door to 9,000 accessible toilets.

You can obtain a RADAR key from Colostomy UK for £3.50 including p&p. Alternatively you can get one from Disability Rights UK for £4.50 including p&p.* They also produce guides which list the accessible facilities by region. You may also be able to obtain a RADAR key from your local council.

*Prices correct at time of publication



Colostomy UK Identity Card

We produce a photo identity card which you can use as proof of your need to use an accessible toilet. The card displays the Disability Rights UK logo and explains that the cardholder has a medical condition and needs to use accessible facilities. Call us for further details.

Remember – getting out and about is good for your well-being! So, even for short journeys prepare in advance, as this will give you the confidence to enjoy your trip.



Having a colostomy shouldn't prevent you from travelling. The important thing is to plan ahead and be prepared.

Travelling Abroad

If you are planning your first trip abroad and have had surgery in the last six weeks, check with your surgeon or GP prior to booking in order to make sure you are able to travel. Also, seek medical approval if you have been in hospital during the last six months.

Supplies

Your comfort is paramount, so you need to make preparations both for travelling and for at your destination. Remember in hot climates your skin will perspire. You might also go swimming. Likewise, your diet may change and so you may need to change your bag more often than usual.

It is advisable to make sure you have ordered sufficient supplies before you travel, as it may not be possible to obtain certain products overseas. Make sure that you submit your order in plenty of time, to avoid last minute panics.

There are no hard and fast rules about how much to take with you, but if you double up on the quantity you would normally use at home this should usually be sufficient. Remember, don't just double up on the number of bags you take, but also on wipes, tissues and disposal bags as well. Even if you normally use closed bags it is an idea to take some drainables too in case of stomach upsets. It is advisable to take with you a note of your product/s name and product code (found on your prescription), as well as the telephone number of your stoma supply company so that if you start to run out of supplies you can contact them; they will do their best to get supplies to you. Just be aware that some countries impose an import tax.

We recommend that you advise your GP or supply company that you are travelling abroad as this will explain why the size of your order has increased.



Travel certificate

Available free from Colostomy UK, this explains to the travel authorities, their staff and security officials, that you have a medical condition and are wearing a stoma bag. It also advises them that you may have an urgent need to use toilet facilities.

The information on the travel certificate is translated into most European languages, along with Arabic, Hindi, Mandarin, Thai and Vietnamese. There is also a form for you to fill in, which includes a section for your GP's details, their signature and practice stamp. If you take this along to a scheduled appointment and ask them to sign and stamp it, it probably won't cost you anything. Your GP might make a charge if you leave the travel certificate with the receptionist at the surgery.

Other travel certificates may also be available from your stoma supply company. Again these need to be signed by your GP and carry the practice stamp. You may also request a letter from your GP stating your medical condition and requirements. It is important to make sure that the letter is on the surgery's official headed notepaper, particularly if it includes a request for an additional hand luggage allowance. This might attract a cost, but can be a worthwhile investment.

Carry your travel certificate with you at all times when abroad. To obtain yours, please contact us well in advance of your trip.



Travel Advice

Insurance

We produce a factsheet of insurers who provide a range of policies suitable for ostomates and people with pre-existing medical conditions. You can download this from our website or we can send you a copy. We recommend that you contact several companies as quotes can vary and price should not be the only consideration. It is important to compare the content and level of cover too. When applying for travel insurance make sure that you declare everything. Declare your stoma and the medical condition that resulted in your stoma. Make sure you also declare **other** pre-existing medical conditions. If you fail to do this, it can invalidate your insurance.

It is important to select the correct level of cover, which includes any extra costs incurred in obtaining emergency supplies. You should also read the small print. Age, time since surgery or treatment, destination and length of stay, along with pre-existing medical conditions are the main determinants of premium levels and cover offered. This means that delaying travel until 12 months after your treatment might be cheaper than going after 11 months. There are normally 3 rating areas ranging from cheapest to most expensive, as follows: Europe; Worldwide excluding the Caribbean, USA and Canada; Worldwide including the Caribbean, USA and Canada.

European Health Insurance Card

In addition to your travel insurance, you should always carry a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) if you are travelling in the European Economic Area or Switzerland. This is because your insurance company may not cover the cost of treatment covered by the EHIC. The card is free and easy to apply for (see below).

The EHIC allows you to benefit from reciprocal health agreements in EEA countries and entitles you to free or reduced cost state medical care in the country you are visiting. Sometimes, you will have to pay for things up front and then claim the money back later. Up to date details on cover can be found by contacting:

call: **0300 330 1350**

or visit: **<https://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card>**

You should allow at least three weeks for your card to be delivered. Up-to-date information about the scheme can also be found on the same website. Further useful travel information can be found by

visiting: **<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/>**

Packing your stoma supplies

As we all know, carriers occasionally lose luggage. For complete peace of mind, it is best to pack your entire stock of supplies in your hand luggage. You should always check luggage size limits with your airline and airport before you travel, as these can vary and are subject to change from time-to-time.

If you need to take more supplies than you can fit into your hand luggage allowance, contact the airport security manager at your departure airport well in advance of your flight. S/he may be able to issue you with a dispensation letter allowing extra hand luggage on medical grounds. You will have to itemise for the security manager all the supplies you need to take. Before making contact, ask your GP for a letter confirming these needs and carry it with you abroad in case you are using internal flights in another country. Alternatively, you can pack as much as possible and perhaps persuade travelling companions to carry some supplies for you as well.

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

For complete peace of mind,
it is best to pack your entire
stock of supplies in your
hand luggage.

Airport scanners and security

Ostomates travelling through international airports are especially concerned about the full body image scanners that have been introduced. Many people fear that these will show their naked body. This is not the case. Instead they are designed to pick up potentially threatening items (weapons, chemicals, liquids) the location of which the operator sees displayed on an outline 'human body'.

As security staff are duty bound to investigate any anomalies, it is advisable to change your bag just before going through security. It can also be helpful to carry one of our travel certificates or, better still, wear one of the lanyards referred to later in this booklet (see page 13) if the airport you are travelling through offers such a scheme.

If you are asked to step aside because the operator has seen 'something', this will be done discreetly. If a search is considered necessary you can request that this is carried out in private. Security officers are trained to deal sensitively with such issues. They will also be able to recognise a stoma bag.

Remember – Passengers can refuse to enter a body scanner but, if they do so, they will have to agree to a full body search before they are permitted to fly.

For further information, visit the Civil Aviation Authority at:

<https://www.caa.co.uk>



Bon Voyage

Leaks

No one wants to have a leak, but they do occur. Some stoma supply companies provide complimentary disposable bed pads, which you might want to consider taking with you.

Fluids

Fluids are very important. In hot countries you lose fluids through perspiration. Medical advice is to drink plenty of water. Avoid drinking very cold water as this remains in your stomach longer and takes longer to be absorbed by the body. It is also advisable to drink bottled water unless you can be sure that the tap water is safe.

Remember

If you irrigate and the quality of the tap water is questionable, make sure you irrigate with bottled water.

Useful medication

It is a good idea to take an electrolyte replacement solution with you in case you become dehydrated. It is also worth speaking to your stoma care nurse, GP or pharmacist prior to travel about medication for firming things up if your stoma output increases or loosening if you become constipated.





How to help yourself

- Watch what you eat, especially the day before you travel. You know the sorts of foods that give you problems so be careful to avoid these before travelling. Try to avoid skipping meals too, as this can cause excess wind and fluid.
- If your stoma is in an awkward position buy a protector to prevent your bag getting trapped or rubbed by the safety belt in planes and coaches. On longer journeys you can be strapped for a while if there is a lot of turbulence on your flight.
- If you are flying, then check in as early as you can. This way you can request an aisle seat near the toilet. You may even be able to request this further in advance, via your travel agent.
- Try to wear loose fitting clothes. Particularly on a long air journey cabin pressure can cause swelling of the feet, ankles and waistline. Drink plenty of water and walk about when you are able to.
- Avoid ice in drinks unless the cubes are made from bottled water. Watch out with salads too, as these may have been washed in tap water. For similar reasons, ice cream is also best avoided.
- Many UK airports now offer hidden disability passengers use of a lanyard to wear on their journey through the airport. This identifies you to staff as someone who may need additional support or understanding. Staff will have been specially trained to recognise the lanyards and act accordingly. These will be available from assistance reception areas in the terminals. Its worth contacting your airport in advance for further information on their lanyard scheme. If you require assistance at the airport, please let your airline know at least 48 hours before your flight.

Travel Check List

On top of all the normal things, an ostomate needs to remember to:

- ☐ Take sufficient supplies for your stay.
- ☐ Take all supplies as hand luggage.
- ☐ Ask the airline in advance if an extra hand luggage allowance is required.
- ☐ Check in as early as possible to secure preferred seat.
- ☐ Avoid foods and drinks the day before you travel that are likely to cause upset or excessive wind.
- ☐ Carry your travel certificate and other such documentation, especially when passing through immigration or security areas.
- ☐ Pack all your normal medications and any that may be required if your output becomes loose or you become constipated.
- ☐ Take with you some form of electrolyte replacement solution in case you become dehydrated.
- ☐ Drink bottled water in foreign countries, avoid ice in drinks and use bottled or boiled water to clean around your stoma.
- ☐ On arrival, store your supplies in a cool place, out of direct sunlight.

**Don't forget your
FREE Travel Certificate
contact general enquiries:
0118 939 1537**





Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will my bag blow up because of variations in cabin pressure?

A: NO. Your bag will behave as normal. However, eating and drinking sensibly will lessen the chance of wind in your bag.

Q: What if I have to change my bag while on the plane?

A: Have everything you need readily accessible during the flight. Some people prefer to wear a drainable bag which can be drained down the toilet. If you prefer to wear your usual closed bag it is acceptable to wrap it well and dispose of it in the bin in the toilet cubicle.

Q: Can I obtain replacement supplies abroad?

A: You may be able to buy supplies from a pharmacy but there is no guarantee. Always take a copy of your prescription with you for reference. But the same products may not be available abroad and will almost certainly have different code numbers if they are. You will probably have to pay at least a proportion of the cost, because you will not be registered in the country as having a chronic condition. Remember to keep your receipts, as these might be required for a travel insurance claim. If you are unable to find a pharmacy that can offer supplies, visit the main hospital where you are staying. Even if they cannot supply you they may know where you can obtain them.

If you plan carefully you shouldn't experience any problems. Above all, relax and make sure you have a great time!

Useful Information

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

NHS Business Services Authority
EHIC Applications
Bridge House
Pilgrim Street
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE1 6SN
Tel: 0300 330 1350
Web: www.ehic.gov.uk

Foreign & Commonwealth Office UK

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
General enquiries: 020 7008 1500
Email:
TravelAdvicePublicEnquiries@fco.gov.uk
Web: www.fco.gov.uk

National Rail Enquiries:

Contact: 03457 484 950
www.nationalrail.co.uk

Fit for Travel

Health information for people travelling abroad from the UK, provided by NHS Scotland
Web: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Passports

For help, call the IPS Passport Adviceline on: 0300 222 0000

The Adviceline is open:

8:00am to 8:00pm Monday to Friday

9:00am to 5:30pm weekends and public holidays

Web: www.gov.uk/passport-advice-line

Changing Places Toilets

Searchable map by UK postcode for toilets

Web: www.changing-places.org

For all enquiries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland contact

Telephone: 020 7696 5597

Email: ChangingPlaces@mencap.org.uk

For all enquiries in Scotland contact

Telephone: 01382 385 154

Email:

PamisChangingPlaces@dundee.ac.uk

ABTA – The Travel Association

Web: www.abta.com

VisitEurope

Web: www.visiteurope.com

Civil Aviation Authority

Tel: 0330 022 1500

www.caa.co.uk



Clothing Specialists

Swimwear

The following is a list of ladies and gents swimwear suppliers:

ComFizz

Tel: 0113 266 2096

www.comfizz.com

CuiWear

Tel: 0800 2792050

www.cuiwear.com

Respond

Tel: 0800 220 300

www.respond.co.uk/product-category/ostomy-support-wear/

Vanilla Blush

Tel: 0141 763 0991

www.vblush.com

White Rose Collection Ltd

Tel: 0345 460 1910

www.whiterosecollection.com

NB: All the information contained in this booklet is correct at the time of going to print.

Support from Colostomy UK

We hope that you have found this booklet useful. Many of our volunteers are frequent travellers. If you would like to talk to one of them before you go away, then please call or e-mail us and we will be pleased to arrange this.

We provide:

- A 24-hour free helpline: 0800 328 4257.
- Information booklets, leaflets and factsheets about all aspects of living with a colostomy.
- *Tidings*, a quarterly magazine full of the latest news, articles by stoma care professionals, product information and real-life stories from other ostomates.
- A closed Facebook group for supporting each other and exchanging hints and tips.
- A website that provides practical information, details of open days and a directory of organisations, support groups, products and services.



Colostomy UK's flagship magazine *Tidings*, is hailed by ostomates and healthcare professionals alike for the support and information that it provides readers with on a quarterly basis.

Visit our website or call us to sign up for your free copy.

How to contact us

Write to: Enterprise House, 95 London Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 4QA

General enquiries: 0118 939 1537

24-hour free helpline: 0800 328 4257

E-mail: info@ColostomyUK.org

Website: www.ColostomyUK.org



www.facebook.com/colostomyuk



[@ColostomyUK](https://twitter.com/ColostomyUK)

CUK014 09v02r00

Date of Publication: April 2018

Copyright ©2016–2018 Colostomy UK

Registered charity no. 1113471