

Flying High

An Ostomate's guide to Travel

Whether you are an old or new colostomate – there will come a time when you wish to travel and perhaps fly for the very first time since receiving your stoma.

One of the most frequently asked questions of people who are flying for the first time is "will my bag blow up". When I hear that I have visions of us all flying around the aeroplane cabin like Mary Poppins !

Let me assure you - there is no reason why your pouch should be affected by the pressure in the cabin. If there is wind in your pouch, causing it to balloon, it may be caused by eating food that makes wind.

Before setting off on your travels, be aware of any foods that might upset you – fizzy drinks, food that causes odour, food that might make your output a little more liquid. Do make sure that the filter of your pouch is not covered, so ensuring that any wind can escape. If the pouch does fill with wind and the filter does not allow it to escape....a small pin prick in the filter should allow the wind to escape without causing any of the contents to leak out.

I am sure that you have given a great deal of thought to what supplies you will need on your holiday ? How many pouches, flanges and accessories will you need to take with you ? It is always good to take at least twice the amount of pouches and flanges that you would normally use in that time span. A change of water, diet and even the heat can cause us to use more pouches than normal. It will always be better to bring some home than to run out when you are away !

A good idea is to ask your Stoma Care Nurse, to recommend a drainable pouch, (if you do not already use one). This would enable you to empty the pouch when you wish, rather than having to replace it. A drainable pouch is useful when you are travelling and may not have access to disposable bins.

When travelling you should always carry your pouches and accessories in your hand baggage. This will mean that you will keep them close at hand at all times. A smaller bag, with a few supplies can be kept in your travel kit. Your smaller bag should contain, a few pouches (and flange if used) disposal bags, dry soft tissues, soothing wipes, small deodorant spray – (I use sample bottles of perfume from Duty Free !) and anti-diarrhoea tablets. Your scissors will need to be in your checked baggage that is in the hold, if you are flying.

One of the best pieces of advice on items to be included in your small every-day travelling bag (especially for men), that I have heard of, is to include a small torch and a small piece of plastic large enough to kneel on. This is because, in some toilets the lights are on a time switch – and you can easily be caught out just at the wrong time ! The plastic is to save your clothes should you need to kneel to change your pouch.

We are all aware of the size of the toilets on board aeroplanes (and coaches). There will be running water and there are disposal bins (sanitary bin) in the toilets. Your pouch will need to be well wrapped up and disposed of when placed in the bin. It is always a concern- when we use "public toilets" – about "smell". A good squirt of your deodorant spray or perfume spray will ensure that you leave the toilet smelling sweetly.

Another frequently asked question is about disposal of our pouches. Whether we are in the UK or abroad some of us get a little embarrassed to leave them in the open bins of a hotel bathroom. This is quite simply solved by, again, wrapping them up well and placing them in a plastic carrier bag and on leaving the hotel disposing of them in the nearest rubbish bin or public toilet bin.

The Colostomy Association publishes an excellent Travel Guide with advice and a Travel Certificate. The Travel



Certificate is printed in English and a number of foreign languages. It explains to the local immigration official that you have a stoma and if there is a need to examine you, a Doctor should be present. Please keep it with you at all times. An embarrassing incident happened to a member when his wife had the certificate and He was asked "to step this way"!

The Colostomy Association can give you the contact numbers of Travel Insurance Companies that offer travel insurance for pre-existing conditions, including cancer and colostomies.

A little thought before you depart on your travels will ensure that you will have confidence in your ability to cope while you are away from home.

Sometimes it is hard to make and take that first step but with a little help and advice from the Colostomy Association, I just know that you are going to have a wonderful time.

Don't forget to send us a postcard!

Jackie Dudley
CA Trustee - Berkshire