



Top Tips

Top Tips for Hiking and Camping when you have a Stoma by Laila Hudson.

Laila has been living with a stoma (Ileostomy) since June 2020 due to metastatic cancer.

“Over the years I’ve figured out how to keep doing the outdoor activities I love with a stoma in tow. I know there are lots of ostomates out there who are worried about how they might manage their stoma in the great outdoors. I’m here to tell you that it IS possible. I hope this info gives you the confidence and knowledge to get outside and have some adventures”.

FITNESS

As keen as you may be to start scaling mountains again, it’s important to start small and build your fitness gradually.

- Make sure you get the go ahead from your medical team that it is safe for you to return to exercise.
- Start with short, low-level walks and build up the distance gradually.
- Once you feel confident walking comfortably for a decent distance on lower levels, you can introduce hills. Start with smaller hills and gradually increase the ascent.
- Remember – you can always turn back! It’s important you stay safe and don’t injure yourself. The hill will always be there another day.
- For long distance walking it’s good to practice carrying a large pack before setting out on a multiday hike. You can build up the weight you carry and distance you walk gradually. You could even start with a walk round your local park to get used to the feel of carrying a heavier pack.



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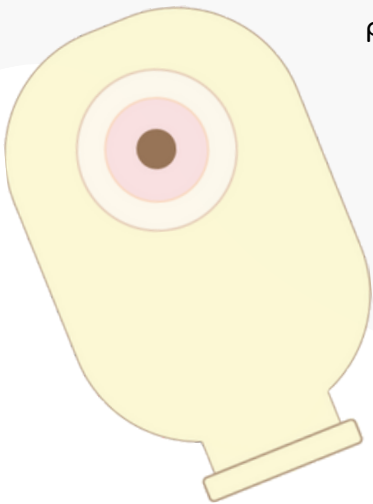
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2. EMPTYING YOUR BAG

If you're planning a day out in the countryside, it's inevitable that you are going to need to empty your bag at some point. This aspect is what worried me most when planning my return to great outdoors but there's nothing to fear. With a bit of planning, it's totally possible.

- Invest in a good trowel. I recommend the Deuce trowel – it's made of titanium so ultra lightweight and is strong enough to dig through roots and hard ground.
- Avoid stony, rooty ground and try and find soft, sandy soil. If you are in a heathery area, look for peaty ground which will be much easier to dig.
- Keep everything you need in a dry bag at the top of your rucksack. This bag can contain your trowel, toilet roll, black bags, wet wipes, and hand sanitiser.
- Find a private area well away from paths, water sources and bothies.
- Use your trowel to dig a hole – make sure the hole is at least 6 inches deep. Kneel next to the hole and empty your bag into it before covering with soil. One bonus of having a stoma is you don't need to get your bum out and it won't be obvious what you are doing!
- If the ground is wet, you can wear waterproof trousers or kneel on a dry bag or plastic bag.
- If you can't find a suitable area to dig a hole, you can simply empty into a disposal bag, double bag it, and dispose later.



3. CHANGING YOUR BAG

If you're planning on multiday hikes, being able to change your bag is essential.

- Choose a time of day when your stoma is least active.
- Get all the items you need out of their packaging and placed in front of you on the floor of your tent.
- Clean your hands with sanitiser before and after changing your bag.
- Secure your clothing with a peg or hair bobble to keep it out the way.
- Once you've finished changing your bag, double bag any waste to dispose of later.
- Make sure your bag change supplies are in a dry bag to protect them from any wet weather. Keep them in an easy to access place in your backpack. Always carry spare supplies, even if you're only out for the day.



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4. DIET AND HYDRATION

- If you know you're going to be outdoors all day without a toilet nearby, try and avoid foods that might cause increased output or excessive air to reduce how much you need to empty your bag.
- Avoid eating any 'risky' foods (e.g. Foods that may cause an obstruction) if you know you're going to be in a remote area where medical help is not easily accessible.
- Focus on eating high energy, low fibre foods. Here are some examples of what I eat while out in the hills (though remember – everybody is different so what suits me, may not suit you!)
 - Breakfast – porridge, banana, toast with smooth peanut butter
 - Lunch – filled roll or bagel, oat cakes with cheese, pasta salad
 - Dinner – tortellini with sauce, noodles
 - Snacks – Cereal bars, oat cakes, cheese snacks, chocolate, crisps.
- It's important to stay hydrated while exercising – especially for those with an ileostomy. Make sure you carry plenty of fluids for the day – more than you think you may need.
- Drink Sports drinks that contain electrolytes or dehydration sachets such as Dioralyte to stay hydrated.
- If on a multiday hike, you can use iodine tablets or filter bottles to safely drink fresh water from fast running streams.





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5. CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT



- Some people like to wear a support band while exercising to give them extra security. Different people have different needs to please consult your stoma nurse about whether you may need to wear a specific support belt.
- High waisted underwear can also support your stoma bag. You can find these in most high street shops or check out Comfizz or Vanilla Blush for stoma specific support underwear.
- Stretchy sports leggings or high waisted trousers can provide support without constricting your bag.
- You might need to try a few different backpacks to find one that suits you and your stoma. You don't want your stoma to be compressed or output to be constricted. Most bags are adjustable, and you can experiment with adjusting the straps to find up a set up most comfortable for you.
- Some people like to use a stoma guard to protect their stoma while wearing a bag with a hip belt.

For further information on getting active please visit the [Active Ostomates](https://www.colostomyuk.org/active-ostomates/) page on our website www.colostomyuk.org/active-ostomates/ or email us at hello@colostomyuk.org to request a copy of our Sport & Fitness after stoma surgery booklet.