

# GOING ON HOLIDAY ?



**A guide for people with a stoma**

# GOING ON HOLIDAY

Holidays are to be enjoyed and if you take a little time to plan ahead you should be problem free.

## TRAVELLING ABROAD

When you have decided on your destination, make an appointment with the practice nurse at your GP's surgery who will be able to give you up to date information regarding any vaccinations or anti malarial treatment necessary for the country you are visiting. You should do this at least two months in advance of your holiday. Most surgeries also provide printed information about appropriate sunscreens and the efficacy of local drinking water etc.

A comprehensive Health Guide for any country you may wish to visit can be found at [www.masta.org](http://www.masta.org) If you are a urostomate and suffer from frequent urine infections it is worth speaking to your G.P. about taking a course of antibiotics with you to use only if necessary. A visit to your dentist for a quick check up may also save you having problems whilst you are away.



## TRAVEL INSURANCE

When booking any holiday you must ensure that you have adequate travel insurance. There are two factors, which will affect your ability to obtain travel insurance now you have a stoma.

### AGE

If you are aged 65 or over many insurance companies will not cover you. At that age it becomes more difficult and more expensive to obtain insurance. Some insurers will offer you cover but they may double the premiums. At age 75 you have even fewer options and at 80 it is almost impossible to find cover. Unfortunately, it is a fact of life that older people represent a higher risk and are more likely to make medical claims. Insurers will simply not take the risk. If you are able to find a policy to cover you, it is likely that you will have to pay a higher premium and you may have to accept having to pay a higher excess, which could be as much as £200, in the event of a claim.

## PRE EXISTING CONDITION

If you have a stoma, or undergoing radiotherapy or chemotherapy treatment or if you have undergone surgery for any other reason you have a 'pre existing medical condition'. Before insurers will agree to provide insurance cover, they will require information on all recent medical events, which may affect you in the future and they will impose conditions which may include the following requirements:-

- (a) you must obtain medical approval for the journey if you have been in hospital during the last six months
- (b) you must not travel against medical advice or specifically to get medical treatment;
- (c) you must not have received a terminal prognosis;
- (d) you must not be awaiting hospital treatment;

You will probably have to go through the insurers screening process. This might involve a telephone call with a medical adviser or you may have to complete a medical questionnaire. Whichever form the screening

process takes, you must be sure to disclose any pre-existing conditions.

If you don't you may find that the insurer will refuse to pay out if you make a claim. If that happens you may be faced with large medical bills, which you will have to pay yourself. When an insurer agrees to cover your pre-existing conditions you are strongly advised to get confirmation in writing. If you don't, you may have difficulty if a dispute arises as to whether or not you disclosed the condition.



Start by trying either **Saga** ([www.saga.co.uk/finance/travelinsurance/](http://www.saga.co.uk/finance/travelinsurance/) or call **0800 559 3231**, ref **IT601**) or **Age Concern** - call **0845 601 2234** and quote reference: **INS406**. There are many sites on the Internet offering travel insurance. Remember wherever you obtain travel insurance you must ensure the cover is suitable for your needs.

## THE EUROPEAN HEALTH INSURANCE CARD (EHIC)

If you're going to a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland, you should also make sure you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) as well as your private health insurance. The card entitles you to Free or reduced cost medical treatment in most European countries.

The card can be obtained by applying on-line, at the Post Office or by calling **0845 606 2030**. The government also has reciprocal agreements with other foreign countries and Commonwealth countries. Check on the Government website for more information.

## POUCH CHOICE

If you have a colostomy and normally wear a closed pouch, a few drainable pouches could be useful in your holiday luggage. It is a good idea to take double the amount of stoma care equipment that you would normally require. Try to mix the batch numbers just in case one batch is faulty. Whether you are travelling at home or abroad you can pick up a tummy bug.

Draining a pouch until this subsides can be much more convenient, it also reduces the frequency of pouch changes and the possibility of sore skin.



## POUCH STORAGE

If you are holidaying in a hot climate you may like to take a cool bag to protect the appliances. Store the appliances in the coolest part of your accommodation. The bathroom is usually the coolest place.

## MEDICINES

If you need to take any medicines with you find out if there are restrictions on taking them in and out of the country you are visiting. Some medicines available over the counter in the UK may be controlled in other countries. Always carry medicines in a correctly labelled container as issued by the pharmacist. If you are taking strong pain relieving medicine it is a good idea to get a covering letter from your GP explaining the reason why you are carrying these drugs. Your GP is entitled to make a charge for this service, however, most don't.

## MEDIC ALERT

You may wish to wear a Medic Alert bracelet as an added safety precaution when travelling at home or abroad. These bracelets have a 'locket like' compartment to hold written information regarding your condition or surgery. This could be helpful if you were to be involved in an accident and unable to communicate with doctors involved in your immediate treatment. Information regarding the Medic Alert bracelet can be obtained from your GP or Pharmacist.



## PACKING

When travelling abroad, pack half of your stoma care equipment in your suitcase, and the other half in your hand luggage. If there is a problem with luggage, or you need a pouch change during the journey, you will be prepared. Pre cut your bags/flanges prior to travelling, or take advantage of the Ostomart appliance cutting service. If you are worried about accidents, take a mattress protector with you for peace of mind. (see the OstoMart Store)

Remember - Scissors must now be packed in hold luggage.

## HAND LUGGAGE

You may be concerned that your hand luggage will be searched when you pass through airport security. If you are unable to speak the language, you can obtain travel cards, which are printed in several European languages and explain your condition and the reason for the equipment you are carrying. Contact Ostomart or your local stoma care nurse who will supply you with one.



## DURING THE FLIGHT

If you are flying long haul (over 4 hours in the air) or a shorter trip to your holiday destination, it is sensible to do the leg exercises recommended by all airlines.

You will usually find information and diagrams about these in your seat pocket. Walk around the aircraft cabin at least once an hour and drink plenty of water. Go easy on alcohol or avoid it altogether whilst flying, alcohol can cause dehydration and could make you more susceptible to Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) You may also wish to purchase flight socks which help to prevent against DVT especially if your flight is a long one.

## AIR TRAVEL & WIND

Air travel tends to make everyone a bit 'windy'. It's difficult to know whether this is due to altitude, not being able to exercise, or to a change of our normal eating patterns because of early morning or late night flights. It's a good idea to have frequent small meals or snacks for 24 hours prior to flying and to refrain from highly spiced or fried and fatty foods. Some people also avoid fizzy drinks before and during the flight. Following these simple tips may make your tummy a bit more comfortable.



## TUMMY UPSETS

Medications useful in the event of a tummy upset or tummy bug are Loperamide (Imodium) which slows down bowel activity, and sachets of rehydration powder (Dioralyte or Rehydrate) which easily dissolve in water and prevent dehydration which can happen as a result of diarrhoea and vomiting, (when abroad, please use bottled or boiled water). Both of these medications are available either on prescription from your GP or over the

counter of your local pharmacy or supermarket. Always read the instructions supplied with these medications very carefully before taking them. A useful tip when taking Loperamide (Imodium) is to take it at least half an hour before food. If your tummy upset does not settle after 24 hours seek medical help and advice

Dehydration does not only occur with bowel upsets and tummy bugs. In hot or humid conditions, we perspire much more and need to replace lost body fluids by drinking more. This applies to all the family, so make sure you have plenty of fluid stops and always carry a bottle of water. Isotonic sports drinks such as Lucozade Sport or its equivalent (now available at most supermarkets and pharmacies) are excellent for combating dehydration. Symptoms of dehydration are thirst, headache, small amounts of dark concentrated urine, dizziness, a feeling of 'light headedness' and weakness, or any combination of these symptoms. If dehydration persists, seek medical advice immediately.

## **SENSIBLE EATING**

One of the best things about travel is trying out different foods, and the last thing we want to do is to restrict our diet. However, a few sensible precautions may help prevent 'holiday tummy'. In very hot countries avoid food that has been standing for long periods of time, especially shell fish and some meat combinations like burgers, sausage etc. Wash salads and fruit before eating, and drink only boiled or bottled water. In some countries, you would need to make sure that the cap of your bottled water is properly sealed. Don't have ice cubes in your drinks and think carefully before you eat ice cream or cream.

## **SWIMWEAR**

When choosing swimwear there are one or two things to remember about design which may help! Patterned fabrics hide secrets that plain ones expose. A good swimsuit lining or double layered fabric will support your abdomen and help to hide the pouch. If you are worried about your pouch becoming detached whilst swimming buy a specially made swimsuit or pair of shorts with a special security pouch included.



## **OstoMART SWIMWEAR**

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Or call us on **0800 220300** to discuss your needs and receive a copy of our catalogue.

***MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, ENJOY YOUR HOLIDAY, RELAX, HAVE A WONDERFUL TIME AND BRING HOME LOTS OF HAPPY MEMORIES.***

***- AFTER THE FIRST TIME AWAY YOU WILL WONDER WHY YOU WORRIED.***

# RESPONDER™

# FREE HOME DELIVERY SERVICE

24 hr home delivery of all Stoma and Continence Appliances.

OstoMART Ltd would like to acknowledge the contribution to this Leaflet of the following people

Di Jones - OstoMART Ltd. - Stoma Care Nurse Advisor

David Eades - The Responder - Associate Consultant (Ileostomy)

Angela Cooke - The Responder - Associate Consultant (Urostomy)

## OstoMART PRESCRIPTION PRODUCTS

OstoSHIELD - Protective Stoma Shield

OstoFIX - Security Tape

OstoFIXforty - Security Frames

OstoFIXeighty - Mini Security Frames

OstoMIST - Odour Neutralising Spray

OstoMIST - Odour Neutralising Drops

OstoSEAL - Protective Powder

OstoGUARD - Barrier Cream

OstoGUARD - NO Sting Barrier Film

OstoCLEAR - Medical Adhesive Remover

OstoSORB - Odour Neutralising  
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[www.ostomartstore.co.uk](http://www.ostomartstore.co.uk)

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for more information  
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If you would like to discuss any of this information in more detail, please contact OstoMART on **0800 220300** or see our website [www.ostomart.co.uk](http://www.ostomart.co.uk). We will put you in contact with our Nurse Advisor Di Jones or you may call your local stoma care nurse if you prefer.