

Tips for traveling



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Traveling is one of the great joys of life, and it's one you should continue to enjoy after your ostomy surgery. In the first few weeks or months you might want to be close to home, to recuperate. But after your recovery period, you should be able to travel anywhere you'd like to go. It's a good idea, however, to check with your doctor or your Wound, Ostomy, Continence (WOC) Nurse before you plan your first post-surgery trip.

Getting ready for your first trip

Some people feel apprehensive about any travel. In that case it's best to start with short trips. Go downtown, to a mall or to the grocery store, until these short trips feel routine. Then plan an overnight trip, even if you go somewhere close to home. Staying elsewhere overnight can help improve your confidence in traveling.

Pouch considerations

Even if you're going for a very short distance, it's a good idea to keep an extra pouching system and supplies in a small travel kit. If you're on a short trip but are delayed by traffic or by an impromptu stop, you'll always have what you need to change the pouch, if needed. If you're on a longer trip, make sure to plan extra time to stop and change the pouch as often as needed. However, your supplies should be stored in a cool place. Don't leave your ostomy products in the car for long periods during hot weather, since the heat may damage the barrier adhesive.

Preparing for a longer trip

People often feel more secure having all the supplies they'll need for the duration of their trip. In some situations it's absolutely necessary – when traveling in rural areas, by cruise ship or to any location that could have few or no medical supply stores. Plan ahead for possible travel delays, too.

You might want to travel with zip-top plastic bags for used pouches, to avoid spilling or odor. In a public restroom or in a hotel room you can dispose of the used pouches in the wastebasket. If you feel self-conscious about leaving pouches in your hotel room wastebasket, use a trash can in a public space.

Tips for air travel

There is always a risk that checked luggage will reach your destination late, or not at all. It is important to pack all of your supplies, if possible, in your carry-on luggage. Consider carrying travel “packs” on the plane as well including a pre cut pouch. Put all of the supplies you'll need for a pouch system change in a zip-top plastic bag. That will make it easier to go to the restroom with the supplies you need, and allows you to throw away the pouch in the plastic bag. If possible, pack your ostomy scissors in your checked baggage in the event they do not comply with TSA guidelines.

Drink fluids to counteract the effects of dehydration and jet lag. A glass of water or fruit juice every hour will reduce the risk of dehydration. Avoid gas-producing foods and liquids on the plane. You may also want to use a pouch with a filter to decrease gas build-up.

Airport security screening

Empty your pouch prior to entering the security area and boarding the plane. This will help take away anxiety about pouch filling or pressure. It's a good idea to pre-cut all of your barriers at home, since some airports may not allow scissors in your carry-on. Even though the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) allows an exception for “ostomy scissors,” this applies only to flights departing the United States. Airport rules can vary from country to country, and airport to airport. So if you do take scissors, keep them in your checked luggage. For the latest information, check the TSA website (www.tsa.gov) for updates.

All airport screening must be conducted in a way that treats the passenger with courtesy, dignity and respect. If the security staff need to do a hands-on pat-down check, you can ask that it be done in a private area. You might find it helpful to carry one or two documents with you. One is a letter from your doctor stating that you have an ostomy. The letter should also include the contact information for your primary care doctor and your ostomy doctor. The second document is the United Ostomy Associations of America (UOAA) Travel Communication Card. You can print the card from the UOAA website (www.ostomy.org). The card offers information about the surgery and the supplies you're carrying.

Additional thoughts

You can find more tips on travel by going to the United Ostomy Associations of America (UOAA) website: www.ostomy.org. It's important that you don't let concerns about your ostomy stop you from traveling where you want to go – whether to a neighboring state or across the globe. If you plan ahead you can do all of the activities that interest you. Enjoy yourself, and travel safe.

Call your healthcare provider if you have any medical concerns about managing your ostomy. You may also contact your Coloplast® Care Advisor for product usage and availability questions at [1-877-858-2656](tel:1-877-858-2656).