

Travel with a stoma

There is more information on bladder cancer and its treatment on our website at actionbladdercanceruk.org

If you have a stoma, you need to do a little more planning when you travel. For example, you'll need to be prepared for journey delays or losing your luggage. More general information about the practicalities of travel after a diagnosis, surgery or treatment is available in our general Travel information sheet.

Be prepared

Take a small changing bag with you when you travel, with plenty of bags and any other supplies you may need.

Car journeys

It's a good idea to keep a night drainage bag in the car so you can empty your bag if you find yourself in a traffic jam.

Seatbelts can press down on a stoma. Some people use a device that locks the seatbelt in a comfortable position but releases safely when necessary. And you can also buy seatbelt ostomy protectors. Some devices marketed for pregnant women also work to reduce the pressure on the abdomen. A simpler solution is the humble spring-type clothes peg, which you can use to make a fold in the belt. Another option is to place a small cushion between your belt and your abdomen.

Flying

You may want to book a particular seat that's on the aisle or near the toilet. On a long flight, if you're worried about not getting to the toilet, you could connect to a night drainage bag concealed in a carrier bag. The bag can be emptied discreetly when it's convenient.

Most airlines – if you contact their special assistance department – will allow you an additional free hand luggage allowance (this may vary according to airline). They may also help with booking the seat you'd prefer.

Most UK airports allow you to have a Hidden Disabilities lanyard which will stop you having to queue for long periods – you can get one at the airport assistance desk or ask when you book your flight.

Visiting warmer countries

You may need to change your bag and patch more often if you're warmer. Dry your skin thoroughly before putting on the new patch – a hairdryer might be useful, but take care that it doesn't get too hot. There are more travel tips in Box ① below.

Travel tips if you have a stoma

- Keep your stoma supplies in a cool place (out of direct sunlight)
- Use bottled drinking water if you're changing your bag when you're out
- Put sun cream on after you've changed your bag
- Seal your used bags and put them into the normal rubbish bins – use public bins if you'd rather not leave them in your room
- A collapsible wide necked plastic bottle (or sports bottle) can be handy in case of emergencies
- A children's waterproof sheet to protect hotel bedding is easy to pack, so you feel less anxious about a mishap





More information

As well as information about bladder cancer and treatments, our website has other information sheets that you might find helpful. You can also find your nearest bladder cancer patient support group.

Other charities have travel advice and tips.

- **Cancer Research UK** at www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/coping/practically/travelling-with-cancer
- **Macmillan Cancer Support** at www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/organising/travel-and-holidays
- **Maggie's** has information here www.maggiescentres.org/cancerlinks/living-cancer/money-work-and-travel/travel-and-cancer/
- **Urostomy Association** at <https://urostomyassociation.org.uk/information/top-tips-urostomyassociation/>