

Inflammatory Bowel Disease Your Passport to Travel

When I go on holiday I try to savour every moment as I know the memory of it will get me through any difficult times in the future.

Ivor, Galway

Your passport to travel with Inflammatory Bowel Disease. Postcards from abroad



To:

All my IBD
friends,
Everywhere!



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INTRODUCTION

travel [trav-uh l]

VERB

To go from one place to another, as by car, train, plane or ship; to take a trip or journey.

NOUN

The act of travelling; journeying, especially to distant places; to travel to other countries.

ORIGIN

1300's Middle English. Originally travail "to toil, to labor, to make a laborious journey".

Travelling is an important part of modern life. Every trip, whether for business or pleasure, within your own country or abroad, requires planning. However, there is a perception that travel is especially laborious for patients with inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD).

This doesn't need to be the case if your disease is under medical control and you take simple preparations and follow basic rules.

If you do, you needn't feel nervous about the prospect of travelling for a short break close to home or an extended holiday to explore the world.

This booklet gives you some simple and practical advice to make your trip memorable for all the right reasons.



"When preparing to travel, lay out all your clothes and all your money. Then take half the clothes and twice the money."

Suzan Heller





A BASIC TRAVEL PLAN

No matter what your travel distance or type of transport, there are some things you need to organise for all journeys.

Have a written medical plan

Your plan should include:

- Name and contact information of your gastroenterologist and IBD nurse specialist.
- Name of a gastroenterologist or specialist hospital at your destination (your own hospital will be able to help you with the name of an appropriate specialist at home or abroad).
- A letter from your IBD team indicating your specific disease, date of onset, location of disease, current and previous medications, surgeries, other medical conditions, allergies and details of flare ups and their management (this will be especially useful to any new medical team you encounter).
- A simple internet search on emergency hospitals and pharmacies in the area you are travelling to. The EFCCA (European Federation of Crohn's & Ulcerative Colitis Associations) website, www.efcca.org, will have a list of doctors in some European countries, and it will have details of worldwide IBD organisations that may be able to help you with information about medical care for visitors in different countries.

Your medications are your health

Your medications are crucial to your continued health, so make sure that you:

- Bring a sufficient quantity for your entire trip
- Bring them in their original sealed containers
- Carry them in your hand luggage, don't be separated from them
- Carry a letter from your medical team stating your illness and your need for these medications. (This will help at security checks)
- Enquire about possible restrictions on medications, needles and syringes in each airport you are travelling through
- Keep your medications in a cooler bag if they need refrigeration
- Wear a 'MediAlert' bracelet or carry a steroid card if you are taking steroids whilst travelling. (Steroids should not be stopped suddenly, and a card or bracelet will alert a new medical team of your condition in an emergency)
- Always bring your original prescription in case you lose your medicines

In addition to prescription medicines, over the counter medicines including rehydration tablets or sachets, simple painkillers such as paracetamol, anti-diarrhoeals and antacids may be helpful.

TRAVELLING WITHIN YOUR OWN COUNTRY

Travelling by car gives you the advantage of stopping whenever you need. It is a good idea when planning your route to check the location of accessible toilets. These can be found in hotels, fast food restaurants and some petrol stations. A 'NO WAITING' card is available from many Colitis and Crohn's Disease societies. Showing this card indicates that you have a medical condition and require a toilet urgently. When travelling by train you should sit in an aisle seat near the toilets. Bus journeys can be long and there may not be toilet facilities on board. Make sure frequent stops are available.

*Swollen ankles
from walking a
lot? Cool room
and stick your
feet up for half
an hour. Looks
odd - but
works!*
Sara, Wicklow

Your passport is valid with inflammatory bowel disease. Postcards from Ireland



To:

Mr Puffy Ankles
Abroad



Your emergency travel kit

It can be very useful to pack an emergency travel kit for your journey. This should contain the following:

- ✓ Tissues
- ✓ Alcohol-free wet wipes
- ✓ Spare underwear
- ✓ Air freshener
- ✓ Toilet-roll
- ✓ Spare set of clothing
- ✓ Plastic bags
- ✓ Hand sanitiser

TRAVEL



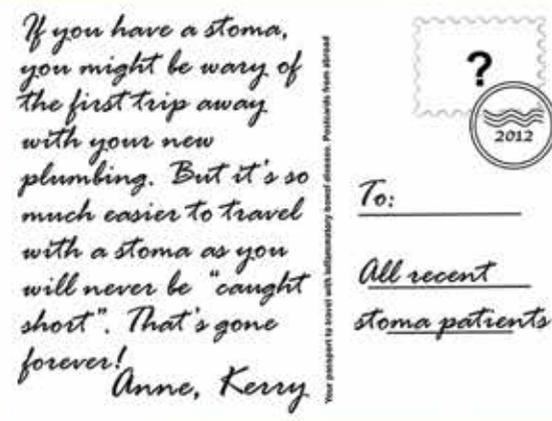
TRAVELLING ABROAD

Vaccinations

You may need to receive travel vaccinations when travelling to certain countries. Plan ahead, since some vaccinations need to be taken two or three months before you travel. Depending on your destination and activities while abroad you may need vaccinations for hepatitis A and B, yellow fever, rabies, typhoid, diphtheria and tetanus, measles, mumps and rubella or polio. You should avoid live vaccines such as polio and yellow fever if you are taking immunosuppressant medications such as steroids, azathioprine, mercaptopurine, ciclosporin or methotrexate.

Insurance

Make sure your travel insurance covers cancellation due to ill health as well as medical health treatment abroad. If you do not currently have any insurance and you wish to obtain some, ensure that the company will cover you if you have a pre-existing condition. If you are travelling in Europe you should carry your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) which is free. This card entitles you to reduced cost or free medications in most European countries. Keep all your medical bills so you can make an effective claim from your insurance company when you return home.



Air travel

Air travel creates its own particular set of problems. Always keep your medications in your hand baggage and letters from your doctor will help at customs and security checks. However, do verify with your airport before you travel that medications, including syringes and needles are allowed as carry-on luggage. In addition, you should check with the embassy of the country you are going to visit that these medications and other medical devices will be allowed through customs.

When travelling by air you should request an aisle seat close to the toilets. Depending on the size of the airplane, your flight may board anytime from 20 minutes to an hour before flight time. Ask an airline employee when they expect to start boarding the plane and plan your last bathroom break in the airport accordingly. Passengers are generally not allowed to get up and move about the cabin of the airplane during taxi, take-off, and landing. Ask a flight attendant what time landing may begin and plan to take your last bathroom break beforehand.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT or blood clots in your legs) can occur in anyone on a long journey. Long haul flights are a significant risk-factor, but long journeys by car, bus or train can also put you at risk. IBD patients are a greater risk than the normal population for developing DVTs, but the risk can be minimized by drinking plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic), not smoking, moving about frequently and moving your legs regularly even when sitting, taking regular deep breaths and wearing compression socks for long journeys.

If you are travelling through a number of time zones you should work out the time for you to take your medications. Exact timing is not crucial, and either taking a single extra dose or missing out a dose should not have any adverse affect on your disease.

Use the toilet before passing through security - there may be a long queue. On board, use the toilet before the food trolley blocks the aisle. It's no fun being stuck behind one when you need to go!

Mary, Dublin



WHEN YOU GET THERE

Diet

Stick to a diet you know works for you at home. Take a supply of nutrition bars and electrolyte supplements. Avoid tap water, even in ice cubes and drink only bottled water. Remember to use bottled water even when rinsing your mouth or washing your teeth. Don't swallow water when swimming or showering. Avoid fresh fruit juices, raw vegetables and salads, and peel all fruits yourself. When eating in restaurants, steer clear of salad bars, buffets, prepared canapés, shellfish and foods served at room temperature. Avoid local ice cream and other dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized and prepared under sterile conditions.

Don't eat salads in mainland Europe. They are washed with unfiltered water and you may get sick. You don't want to get sick while enjoying a relaxing break, do you?

Eddy, No disclosed location

Your passport is travel with infectious blood disease. Pictures from internet



To: _____

Vegetarians
worldwide



Bathrooms

Finding a bathroom while travelling can be tricky. You may sometimes need to use a bathroom in a hurry, so when travelling in a strange city or in a strange country, you need to be prepared. You may need to pay to use public toilets in some countries, so keep some change on you at all times. Flushing mechanisms may be located on the floor in the form of a pedal, or above in the form of a chain that you pull. Be sure to find out how the toilet works before it becomes a problem. Remember to carry your emergency kit with you since public toilets may not be supplied with toilet paper. Antibacterial hand gel is a good idea no matter where you're travelling.

Remember,
wherever you are,
shopping centres
always have a
disabled loo. This
will guarantee
you a place to
freshen up in
private.

Claire, Dublin, xxx

Your passport to travel with inflammatory bowel disease. Photographs from abroad



To: _____

All,
(Especially
shopaholics!)

If you don't speak the language, you'll want to at least be able to ask where the nearest toilet is located.



French:

Where is the toilet?
Où sont les toilettes?
(OOH soh lay twa-LEHT?)



Spanish:

Where is the toilet?
¿Dónde está el baño?
(DOHN-deh ehss-TAH EHL
BAH-nyoh)



Italian:

Where is the toilet?
Dov'è il bagno?
(doh-VEH eel BAA-nii-oooh?)



German:

Where is the toilet?
Wo ist die Toilette?
(voh ist dee toy-let-teh)

Be brazen and don't
be embarrassed if
you need to use a
toilet urgently. Just
skip the queue -
they'll never be
seeing you again!

Aoife, Currently in
New Zealand

Your passport to travel with inflammatory bowel disease. Photographs from abroad



To: _____

All IBD
patients

Hot climates

You need to take extra care not to become dehydrated in hot climates. Avoid heavy exercise during the day and drink plenty of liquids with salt tablets to replace lost body fluids and salts. Look out for a dry mouth and skin, decreased sweating, light headedness and fatigue, headaches and dark concentrated urine – all may be signs of dehydration.

Sunshine

Take special care in the sun if you are taking an immune modulator for your IBD. Azathioprine, mercaptopurine and methotrexate may all make your skin more sensitive to sun damage. Use a high skin protection factor sunscreen at all times and sit out for only a short time on your first day in case of a severe photosensitivity reaction.

Drink beer – It doesn't need ice to cool it, unlike spirits and mixers. Remember, ice is a no-no in warm countries!
Beryl, Dublin

Your passport is safer with inflammatory bowel disease. Passports Open Ireland



To:

All IBD patients



Infections

Traveller's diarrhoea is common in normal populations, but may be more severe in IBD. Remember, most cases improve within a few days even without treatment. Drink plenty of liquids to minimize dehydration. Oral rehydration preparations which have been dissolved in recently boiled water are even better. Alcohol, caffeine and citrus drinks may all worsen dehydration and should be avoided. As you improve, you can begin to eat soft foods such as boiled rice and bananas. A single dose of ciprofloxacin may significantly shorten the duration of diarrhoea. Ask your doctor for advice before you go on holiday.

Bloody diarrhoea may either be a flare up of your disease or due to a bacterial infection. Local doctors and hospitals will be very familiar with the symptoms and signs of infectious diseases and should be consulted as early as possible, especially if you experience danger signals such as high fevers, chills, profuse bloody diarrhoea, vomiting or severe abdominal pain.

If you are travelling to an area where malaria is endemic you should ask for advice regarding preventative measures for malaria and avoiding insect bites. Remember that mosquitoes are usually active between dusk and dawn. Mosquito bites can penetrate jeans and other tight fitting clothes so protect yourself by wearing light coloured, loose clothing which covers your arms and legs. Use an effective insect repellent, preferably one containing diethyltoluamide (DEET).

CONCLUSION

You can travel safely and with confidence if you follow the above.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Mark Twain

