



Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) is the term used to describe ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease – two long-term conditions that involve inflammation of the gut. Both Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis can be unpredictable in terms of how and when symptoms change, and we are largely unsure of their causes and triggers. This can be difficult when traveling abroad.

Before traveling

Check which vaccinations are required for your destination. Some live vaccines cannot be given if you are on medications that weaken the immune system. Live vaccines include yellow fever, BCG (tuberculosis), oral typhoid, measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox.

If you are traveling to an area with risk of malaria, you may be advised to take anti-malarial prophylaxis. Some antimalarials have side effects that could affect your IBD. There can also be some adverse interactions between some antimalarials and some drugs used for IBD. Make sure you discuss this with your doctor or one of the Everbridge clinicians prior to travel.



Other things to be aware of when traveling with IBD include:

- Traveler's diarrhea. There is some evidence that this can worsen or at times trigger either form of IBD. Anecdotal evidence suggests that dysentery (diarrhea with blood and fever) is dangerous in patients with poorly controlled ulcerative colitis and can precipitate very severe diarrhea and bleeding.
- IBD is uncommon in some parts of the world and gastroenterologists in some countries may have had little opportunity to become experienced in managing these conditions.
- IBD is often treated with drugs that suppress the immune system. Common ones are azathioprine, prolonged doses of corticosteroids (prednisolone or budesonide) or some of the newer agents such as infliximab. (Also see our information sheet on traveling when immunosuppressed).

Consider taking a standby antibiotic recommended by your specialist and use this according to instructions given to you at the first sign of diarrhea or worsening bowel symptoms in order to treat any potential infection. Do not presume that worsening diarrhea is simply a deterioration in your underlying condition.

It is best to discuss your travel with your specialist before departure and ask for their advice on the following:

- If the proposed trip is recommended
- Any modifications that need to be made; e.g. consider distance from appropriate medical facilities with good standards of care
- How to manage any flare-ups or worsening of symptoms. This must include instructions on how and when to increase the dose of any medication being taken, and how and when to use any additional stand-by medication. It is useful to take a medical summary of your condition with you, including the history of your condition, treatments and any allergies.

It's a good idea to have a look at the healthcare available at your destination in advance. Discover the names and addresses of hospitals and specialists who can be consulted if symptoms flare-up and carry the contact details of your specialist team to consult if needed.

Take adequate medical supplies with you, including extra to cover any delays, and a photocopy of your prescription. Also see our information sheet on carrying medicines internationally. If your medication needs to be kept in a fridge, ensure you have planned for this at your accommodation. It may be best to ensure that any accommodation you are booking has an en-suite toilet.

Traveling with a stoma:

- With careful planning, having a stoma should not prevent you from traveling.
- Take ample stoma supplies. You may need to change your appliance more frequently, as you are likely to be eating differently.
- Before a long flight, try to avoid food or drink that could cause excessive wind or upset. The pressure differences in the cabin can expand gases in the body and may cause more gas in your bag.
- You may want to consider drainable bags while you are away, as these may be easier to empty.



During travel

Consider whether booking an aisle seat or close to the bathroom on the plane may be better for you. If taking long road trips, consult a trip planning guide to check where rest stops are with bathrooms. The IBDpassport.com website has details of toilet map apps for different countries.

If there is any additional assistance or requirements you need when traveling by plane, contact the airline at least 48 hours before you fly. Airlines and airports have a variety of provisions for providing care.

Carry your medication in your hand luggage when flying, in case your baggage is delayed or lost. If you need to take more than 100ml of medicine as a liquid, gel, cream, or paste, you will need to show a prescription or doctor's letter. If you need to take syringes and needles, it is best to check with your airline on any restrictions or rules they have.

Having IBD puts you at increased risk of DVT or blood clots. Flights of over four hours are thought to be more likely to cause blood clots, and long

journeys by car, bus or train can also increase risk. You might want to talk to your IBD Team about your risk of developing a DVT and whether you should wear compression stockings or take anti-coagulant medication. See also our information sheet on travel-associated venous thrombosis.

At your destination

Take strict precautions with food and water hygiene to minimize the risk of developing traveler's diarrhea. See also our information sheet on traveler's diarrhea.

Avoid becoming overtired or overstressed, planning ahead for work life balance whether traveling or working/living abroad.

Ensure that you avoid any foods known to make your symptoms worse and to eat foods you know have no adverse effects.

Always call the Everbridge Assistance line if help is required with medications or any medical issues during travel.

References

Lankester, T, (2006), The Travellers Good Health Guide. London: Sheldon Press

Fit for Travel, Travel and Inflammatory Bowel Disease. Available at: <https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/travel-and-inflammatory-bowel-disease> [Accessed 9th January 2023]

Crohn's and Colitis UK, Travel and IBD. Available at: <https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/info-support/information-about-crohns-and-colitis/all-information-about-crohns-and-colitis/living-with-crohns-or-colitis/traveling-with-crohns-or-colitis> [Accessed 9th January 2023]

This factsheet has been developed for educational purposes and is correct at the time of production. It is not designed as a replacement for professional medical advice. Please consult your medical professional for any concerns or queries regarding Inflammatory Bowel Disease whilst traveling.



About Everbridge

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