

# Travelling with Confidence



*In*contact  
[www.incontact.org](http://www.incontact.org)



# Introduction

Having a bladder or bowel problem needn't stop you from going on holiday. All you need to do is plan ahead.

You might have questions like:

- 'How will I take all my supplies with me?'
- 'Will my hotel be able to provide bed protection?'
- 'What if there are no public toilets?'
- 'Do all trains have accessible toilets?'
- 'What happens if I'm searched at the airport?'
- 'How can I manage my problem on a long flight?'

This booklet is designed to help you answer these, and other questions you may have. We asked our members how they cope with travelling and going on holiday – we are sure that you will find their responses very useful.

You will find a list of helpful organisations on the back page and more about *Incontact* on page 17.

Happy travelling!



*Outings are punctuated with toilet visits. But I refuse to let it rule my life. I'm alright! It's my body that has the 'problems'!*



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*Going to a new place can be an anxious time when you have a bladder or bowel problem. Planning ahead is essential to overcome potential problems.*



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## Planning ahead

If you plan ahead, you will have time to sort out any problems before you set off on your holiday. Once everything has been taken care of, you can relax and enjoy your holiday when you get there.

### *Choosing a venue*

#### **I need help planning my holiday – what should I do?**

If you are looking for help planning your journey, contact Tripscope, who offer an information and advice service (their contact details are on the back page).

Holiday Care also provides information about transport, accommodation and attractions in the UK and overseas – see back cover for details.

### *Supplies*

#### **How can I be sure I have enough supplies for my trip?**


Take an adequate supply of all the products you use – pads or pants, catheters, sheaths, drainage bags, wet wipes and flannels. Remember to order the extra supplies you need for your trip in plenty of time. Ask your doctor for extra prescribed medications or products and/or ask your pad supplier for more pads.

Also ask your doctor for a course of antibiotics to take in case of a urinary tract infection whilst away (while you are at the doctor's, ask them for the letter we refer to under *Documentation*). You might also want to take a bulking agent in case of diarrhoea, or a mild laxative in case of constipation (both can be obtained from your local chemists).


If you are travelling in the UK or Ireland, it might be possible to post a package of your supplies (pads, catheters, etc) ahead to your accommodation. This will save on your luggage space – although any extra space on the way home will be useful for souvenirs! Do make sure that you package them carefully – some products, such as pads, will need to be kept dry so you might want to wrap them in a plastic bag first. If you are staying in a hotel, tell them to expect a package and ask them to store it until you arrive.

If possible, you could check to see if the products you use are easily available in the country you are travelling to – ask your travel agent, or any friends who have been there. This would save room in your suitcase. But, always take extras in case something unexpected happens.

If you think you might change the way you manage your problem for the trip (like switching from intermittent catheters to an indwelling catheter), try it out at home before you go, so if there are any problems, you can sort them out before your trip. Contact your doctor or continence advisor if you have any concerns.



*If you are thinking of changing your management method for your holiday, try the alternative method out at home first. Any problems could ruin your well-deserved holiday.*



## How can I ISC safely away from home?

Toilet facilities are likely to be different when away, especially in other countries (like France, or the Middle East, where you might have to squat over a hole in the ground). There might not always be handwashing facilities, either. You might like to try a different type of intermittent catheter – e.g. one that is self-lubricating, or one that needs minimal handling. Ask your continence advisor, or contact Promocon for information on the range of catheters that are available. *Incontact* has an information sheet on catheters, too. Contact details can be found on the back cover.

It might also be worthwhile investing in an alcohol-based handwash that doesn't require water.

## Shall I tell my hotel/accommodation that I have a problem before my holiday?

It is not necessary to tell your hotel, villa or holiday park that you have a bladder or bowel problem before you go. But having the courage to speak up and ask for items or services which you might need will make your trip more enjoyable.

If you intend to do your own laundry, find out where you can wash and dry items in private if necessary. A few coathangers, a portable washing line and a few pegs will help.



*If an accident happens, most places are understanding.*



## Clean-up kit

### **How can I clean-up if I have an accident when away from home?**

It is a good idea to take a small bag containing your 'clean-up kit'. This could contain a change of clothes, pads, disposable gloves, a small mirror, handwash, wet wipes and plastic bags. Remember to keep your clean-up kit stocked up so you can use it each time you go out.

There is a range of products to help prevent soreness (e.g. cleansing foams and barrier creams). If you are worried about odours, buy a deodoriser. Another pleasant way to mask smells is to burn incense or scented candles.

You might also like to take a toilet roll with you.

Ask Promocon or your local chemist for more advice on the products available. *Incontact* also produces a factsheet about skin care and hygiene.



*I no longer let my problem stop me from going out and enjoying the things I want to do*



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## Clothing

### **What clothes shall I take for my trip?**

If you find it hard to undo your clothing, you might find it easier to wear skirts or trousers with elasticated waists or velcro instead of fiddly zips and buttons.

If you use a catheter and leg bag, try wearing longer shorts (such as bermuda shorts) for added comfort and confidence. You can also buy clothes with pockets that hold leg bags or have a flap at the front that can be undone easily when you need to catheterise.

A catheter valve could allow you to go swimming. If you want to lie in the sun, a swimsuit with a short skirt would hide any bulky pads. There is also swimwear available for those with ostomies – contact Promocon for more details on clothing.

## Luggage

### **Am I allowed extra baggage allowance?**

You need to speak to your airline or coach operators before you travel. Most companies are willing to give you extra luggage allowance if there is a medical reason, although you might need a letter from your doctor confirming it.

If you are travelling with a companion, it may be a good idea to put some of your supplies in their suitcase if they have space.

## What items must I take in my hand luggage?

It is advisable that you carry all medical supplies (drugs, needles, syringes, catheters) with you, along with a doctor's letter (see below). Some items such as enemas need to be carried in your hand luggage as they can explode in the hold of an aeroplane. It is a good idea to check with the airline or product manufacturer if you are not sure which items cannot be stored in the hold.

Documentation

## What shall I do when I go through a security search?

Security searches are now standard practice when you are travelling. Medical supplies such as needles, vials or metal catheters are most likely to show on security monitors. Ask your doctor to write a letter outlining the products and medications you use. This can prove very valuable if you have to go through a security check – if you present it to the security staff before you go through the metal detector, they will not make a fuss to search you in front of other passengers.



*It is possible to carry a pad, folded over, in a coat pocket. If necessary you can place one in a manilla folder or envelope. There are a number of places where you can carry a change without it being obvious.*



## **Should I contact my airline or coach company before I go?**

It's a good idea to write a letter to your airline before you go outlining your problem and stating that catheters, medication, etc might be picked up during a security search. If they know before you travel, less fuss will be made if the security monitor picks up something. You can also pre-book a wheelchair, or seats in the aisle nearest the toilet on a plane. If travelling by coach, ask for a seat nearest the toilet, or nearest the door so you can be first off when you stop for toilet breaks.

## **I use a wheelchair/have mobility difficulties. How can I be sure that my train has a disabled toilet?**

Contact the train company beforehand to find out which facilities are available at stations and on trains. The train company should be able to tell you which trains have a disabled toilet (most modern trains have good facilities). Make sure the seat you reserve is next to the toilet and not in another carriage. Train staff will assist you on and off the train if you book in advance.

*Small change*

## **Is there anything else I should carry with me?**

Make sure you carry small change because you will need to pay a fee to use the toilet in most other countries.



*I have a large shoulder bag which goes everywhere with me. It contains spare pads and everything else I need.*



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# The journey

## Managing your problem

### **How do I manage my problem during the journey?**

If you are going on a long journey, then you may want to alter the way you manage your problem. If you are unlikely to have access to a toilet, you might want to use a more absorbent pad than usual, or an all-in-one diaper style for the trip. A chair pad can give extra confidence and comfort when sitting for long periods. Promocon can supply information on these and any other products that may help. If you use indwelling catheters and/or drainage bags, see below for more information.

Do remember that toilets will be available during the journey. If you contact the airline, train company or coach operator before you go, you might be entitled to preferential treatment (such as booking a seat near the toilet). See *Documentation* above.

### **How do I cope on an aeroplane?**

If you use a wheelchair or have mobility problems, you will normally be boarded ahead of other passengers. Each airport has its own arrangements for getting you to the departure lounge/boarding gate/aeroplane. Ask staff if you can be taken to the toilet before boarding.

If you are boarding along with all the other passengers, go to the toilet when your flight is announced and catheterise or change your pad if necessary. You will have a boarding pass so there is no need to rush onto the plane. Make sure you have been given the aisle seat, if you requested one (see *Documentation* above).

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Drink plenty of still water when flying to avoid the risk of dehydration and ensure you have plenty of supplies with you, in case your flight is delayed.

### **How can I manage an indwelling catheter and drainage bags away from home?**

If you use an indwelling catheter, make sure you take at least one spare with you. Ask your nurse to help you practice changing them. If you use drainage bags, you might want to use a larger capacity bag for the journey. If you have mobility difficulties, attach a catheter valve to the catheter before the leg bag. This allows a carer to detach the leg bag and take it away for emptying. Discuss any concerns with your doctor or continence advisor. *Incontact* has information sheets on drainage bags and catheter valves.

#### *Clothing*

### **What clothes shall I wear?**

Loose fitting clothes are more comfortable when travelling. If you wear a skirt or trousers with an elasticated waist, going to the toilet and changing will be easier. It's also a good idea to wear dark or patterned clothing, which will help disguise any accidents until you can get to a toilet and clean-up. *Promocon* can also offer advice on clothing adaptations if you need to get to catheters/leg bags more easily.

## When you arrive

### Changes in environment

#### **How can I avoid constipation, diarrhoea or urinary tract infections when on holiday?**

A change in diet or temperature when on holiday can affect your bladder and bowel habits. In hot weather, for example, you can easily dehydrate. This produces dark concentrated urine which may irritate your bladder. You should drink more bottled water in a hot climate.

Changes in the food you eat can lead to constipation or diarrhoea. Take extra care when choosing the food you eat, and drink plenty of fluids. If you are concerned about the quality of tap water, then drink bottled water. Also remember to peel any fruit.

### Disposal

#### **How can I dispose of used pads/catheters?**

Take a supply of plastic bags with you. If there is no bin in the toilet, you can put the wet pad/used catheter in a bag and dispose of it into the nearest outside bin.



*It is often overcoming the barriers in our head that is the problem. My advice is get out there and start travelling.*



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## Skin care

### **How can I keep my skin healthy?**

When you are on holiday, it is important to look after your skin. You may find that you are in a wet pad for longer than usual if you are stuck on a coach, a plane, or somewhere with no toilets. This can lead to sore or damaged skin.

Make sure you wash well every day, drying yourself with a soft towel, or a small hairdryer. Try using a barrier cream, which can help prevent soreness.

Remember your *Clean-up kit* (see page 6).



*Having a bladder or bowel problem does not mean you have to stay at home. You know your body better than other people. Do whatever suits you best.*



## Public toilets

### What can I do if there are no public toilets?

Use your 'Just Can't Wait' card, available from *Incontact*. You can show this card when asking to use the toilet of a shop, restaurant or other UK business. It doesn't guarantee you access to their toilets, but it proves that you have a genuine medical condition which requires the urgent use of a toilet. Even if they don't let you use their toilets, they might be able to point you in the direction of the nearest public facilities.



You might also find it useful to apply for a RADAR (The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation) key. For a small fee, you will be sent a key giving you access to disabled toilets throughout the UK, which use the National Key Scheme. RADAR's contact details can be found on the back page.

Is There An Accessible Loo? (ITAAL) produce a Directory of Accessible Loos. Contact ITAAL to purchase your copy (their address is given on the back page).

Remember that toilets differ from country to country so don't be alarmed if you see a hole in the ground! But, these differences can have their advantages – in Spain, for example, it is common to find a bidet in hotel rooms, an ideal way to stay fresh and clean.

## Travelling checklist

- If possible, post some supplies ahead. This will save on luggage space.
- Check if the products you use are available where you are going.
- Before you go, contact the hotel to find out about laundry and washing facilities.
- Contact your airline to see if you can have extra luggage allowance.
- Check if the products you use can be safely stored in the hold of a plane – if in doubt, contact the product manufacturer.
- Ask your doctor if they can provide you with a letter outlining the products and medication that you use.
- If you are considering changing the way you manage your problem when you go away, try it out at home first.
- If flying, remember to take some extra supplies in your hand luggage to allow for delays.
- If you use a wheelchair and are travelling by train, check with the train operator beforehand as not all trains have disabled toilets.
- Wear loose fitting clothes for the journey – they are more comfortable.
- If you are worried about the quality of drinking water on holiday, buy bottled water.
- Take a small bag full of the things you need to clean-up: wet wipes, change of clothes, pads, plastic bags, handwash, cleansing foam, etc.
- Get a 'Just Can't Wait' card. This is useful where no public toilets are available - *In*contact can send you one.
- Don't forget your camera!

## Glossary

**Accident:** Any leak of urine or faeces.

**Bed protection:** A waterproof sheet that can be put over your mattress to help protect it from leaks.

**Catheter:** A hollow tube used to drain urine from the bladder.

**Clean-up kit:** A bag that contains everything you need to clean-up after an accident.

**Constipation:** The inability to pass faeces on a regular basis.

**Diarrhoea:** Faeces that are too runny.

**Indwelling catheter:** a catheter that stays in place for long periods of time.

**Intermittent catheter:** a catheter which is inserted at intervals throughout the day, or when you feel the need to go to the toilet.

**Pads:** Absorbent pads that help to soak up leaks from the bladder.

**Managing your problem:** The products you use to cope with your bladder or bowel problem – pads, catheters, etc.

**Supplies:** The medication and products you use to manage your problem – pads, catheters, etc.

**Urinary Tract Infection (UTI):** An infection in the bladder that can cause pain when you go to the toilet.

**Waterproof pants:** Can be worn, in addition to your usual pants and pads, to help contain leaks.

## About Incontact

*Incontact* is the leading national charity providing free information and support to people with bladder and bowel problems. We have local support groups around the country – please contact us to find out where your nearest group is. There is also a website where you can find more information and contact other people with similar problems to yourself – [www.incontact.org](http://www.incontact.org).

*Other booklets available*

**A Healthy Bladder** – and what to do if things go wrong

**Healthy Bowels** – and what to do if things go wrong

**Leaking Urine** – all about stress incontinence

**Just Can't Wait** – help for people who have to rush to the loo

**Troubled Nights** – help for people who wet the bed

*Product information sheets*

- **Body-worn urinals**
- **Hand-held urinals**
- **Bed and chair protection**
- **Catheters for intermittent use**
- **Catheter valves**
- **Drainage bags**
- **Disposable pads**
- **Washable pads**
- **Skin care and hygiene**
- **Indwelling catheter accessories**
- **Indwelling catheters - users' guide**
- **Intermittent catheters - users' guide**
- **Mail order catalogues**
- **Medication for urinary incontinence**
- **Penile clamps**
- **Penile sheaths**
- **Suprapubic catheters**
- **Suprapubic catheters - users' guide**
- **Surgery for stress incontinence**
- **Surgery for urge incontinence**
- **Urodynamics**

## *Incontact magazine*

The *Incontact* magazine comes out 4 times a year and contains news, readers' letters, pen-pals column and regular features.

*Incontact* is a registered charity and gratefully receives donations – these help us to do more to help the millions of people in the UK living with these conditions. Cheques can be made out to '*Incontact*' – or get in touch with us to find out more about making a Gift Aid donation, setting up a standing order, or leaving a legacy to help us continue our work.



*It is important to talk to someone who understands. My local Incontact group meets once a month - it is good to share experiences and tips on how to cope.*

## Who can I contact for more information?

**Incontact** provides information and support for people affected by bladder and bowel problems. United House, North Road, London, N7 9DP. Phone: 0870 770 3246. E-mail: [info@incontact.org](mailto:info@incontact.org).

Website: [www.incontact.org](http://www.incontact.org)

**The Continance Foundation** produces a range of leaflets on various topics. 307 Hatton Square, 16 Baldwins Gardens, London, EC1N 7RJ. Helpline: 0845 345 0165. Website: [www.continance-foundation.org.uk](http://www.continance-foundation.org.uk)

**Holiday Care** provides information about transport, accommodation and attractions to older people, or those with a disability. 7th Floor, Sunley House, 4 Bedford Park, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 2AP.

Phone: 0845 124 9971. Website: [www.holidaycare.org.uk](http://www.holidaycare.org.uk)

**ITAAL** works to improve the provision of accessible toilet facilities for disabled people and increase the public understanding and appreciation of the personal care needs of disabled people. 10 Stilecroft Gardens, North Wembley, HA0 3HE. Website: [www.itaal.org.uk](http://www.itaal.org.uk)

**PromoCon** offers advice and information on products that can help manage bladder and bowel problems. Redbank House, St Chad's Street, Manchester, M8 8QA. Phone: 0161 834 2001.

Website: [www.promocon2001.co.uk](http://www.promocon2001.co.uk)

**RADAR** has information about keys for disabled toilet facilities, as well as information about holiday accommodation for people with continence problems. 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London, EC1V 8AF. Phone: 020 7250 3222. Website: [www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk)

**Tripscope** provides travel information to people who are disabled or have difficulty getting around. The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Bristol, BS16 2QQ. Phone: 08457 58 56 41. Website: [www.tripscope.org.uk](http://www.tripscope.org.uk)



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