

Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada

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LOCAL INFORMATION

SPONSORS

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Crohn's and Colitis
Foundation of Canada

Fondation canadienne des
maladies inflammatoires
de l'intestin

Travelling with

INFLAMMATORY

BOWEL

DISEASE

The thought of travelling may be a daunting prospect for anyone with a chronic illness, such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). How do you know what is safe to eat or drink while in another country? What if you begin to have symptoms or need medical attention?

Travelling with IBD presents some special challenges, but this doesn't mean that people with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis have to give up travelling. By planning ahead and taking precautions, you can enjoy that special vacation or take that important business trip.

Whether you're planning a few days in another province or a longer vacation to an exotic locale, discuss the trip with your physician or gastroenterologist. If travelling outside Canada, it's also advisable to consult with a travel medicine specialist who can provide travel tips and important information about your intended location. Talk to your pharmacist too, to find out whether your medication and/or supplies require special transport or storage arrangements.

This pamphlet is provided for information only, and should not be used as a substitute for the advice of a professional. A doctor should always be consulted for advice and medical treatment.

Medications and Medical Care

Bring enough medication for the entire trip, plus some extra in case your return is delayed. This also applies to over-the-counter medications and, if applicable, appliance supplies.

Speak with your doctor about whether you may need anti-diarrheal medication for any part of your trip.

All medications should be kept in their original containers, with original labels (including the Drug Identification Number). Bring along a copy of your prescriptions for the medications as well, in case you are asked to prove the medications were prescribed to you.

Always store all of your medication in your carry-on bags, in case your luggage is lost.

Ask your doctor for a letter outlining your medical condition, in case you need medical attention while in another city or country. You might also consider asking your doctor for a written management plan to follow should mild, moderate and/or severe symptoms arise. There may be a fee for such letters but the cost may be worthwhile if it provides extra peace of mind while you're away from home.

Always bring your doctor's name, phone number and e-mail address with you, and try to get the name and phone number of a doctor in the area you'll be visiting. Your doctor or a travel medicine specialist may be able to recommend an appropriate contact.

Ask your doctor for a prescription with your medication's generic name (and foreign brand name if possible) when travelling abroad. You probably won't need to use it but may feel more secure knowing you have it.

Your basic immunization may need updating, and you may need other immunizations depending on where you are travelling. Discuss this with your doctor or travel medicine specialist. (Do this as early as possible to ensure the necessary immunizations are administered and take effect before your trip.)

Contact your health insurance company for information on the coverage they provide to travellers and determine whether you need to purchase additional medical insurance.

The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC) is a not-for-profit voluntary medical research foundation. Our Mission: To find the cure for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. To realize this, the CCFC is committed, first and foremost, to raising increasing funds for medical research. The CCFC also believes it is important to make all people with inflammatory bowel disease aware of the Foundation, and to educate these individuals, their families, health professionals and the public about these diseases.

OUR MISSION: FIND THE CURE. YOU CAN HELP. CALL US.
CROHN'S AND COLITIS FOUNDATION OF CANADA
416-920-5035 or 1-800-387-1479 or visit our web site at: www.ccfc.ca.

Food and Drink

All travellers are at increased risk for gastrointestinal/bowel problems when visiting exotic or developing countries. One problem is 'Traveller's Diarrhea' – an intestinal infection caused by bacteria, parasites or viruses in contaminated food or water.

People with IBD need to be especially careful about the food and water they ingest because their gastrointestinal tracts are sensitive and can be easily aggravated.

Health Canada's guidelines for safe food and water consumption when travelling to exotic or developing countries are: **Boil it, cook it, peel it, or leave it!**

Here are some other tips for food and beverage consumption while travelling:

- Avoid ice, salads, re-heated foods, uncooked foods such as shellfish, and food from street vendors.
- When eating fruits and vegetables, chose those which you can peel yourself.
- Drink bottled or mineral water, or water which has been boiled or disinfected. Use this water for brushing your teeth and preparing any food as well.
- Be careful with dairy products. Boil unpasteurized milk.
- Keep in mind that too much sun, alcohol or spicy food can disturb normal digestion.

Accommodations and Mode of Travel

Check ahead with your hotel to find out about the accommodations and whether appropriate bathroom facilities are available. The bathroom facilities may be shared or may not be on the same floor as your room.

When travelling by air, pre-book your flight to secure an aisle seat close to the bathroom. You can also usually pre-arrange in-flight meals if you have dietary restrictions. Call the airline or your travel agent to ask about wheat-free, non-lactose or other special meals.

When travelling by bus, confirm the bus has a bathroom on board. "Toilet stops" may be scheduled along the way, but they may not be convenient for you.

If you are travelling a long distance by car, plan your route along well-travelled roads which are more likely to have roadside restaurants, gas stations and other 'pit-stop' facilities.

You may also want to bring a few rolls of toilet paper along in case any of the facilities you use throughout your trip are out of paper.

Helpful Links

Health Canada's Travel Medicine Program at www.travelhealth.gc.ca

The United Ostomy Association of Canada at www.ostomycanada.ca/ostomies/hints.htm

The International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers at www.iamat.org