

Travelling with Incontinence

Travelling can be one of the joys of life — and sometimes a necessity — but if you have a bladder control problem or perhaps soiling, it can be an anxious time.

Planning ahead and thinking about your needs in advance will help prevent embarrassment and hassles and make your trip so much more enjoyable! Here are some tips to stay as dry and comfortable as you can, with the least amount of bother to yourself or to other passengers:

- Think ahead about each stage of the trip and plan accordingly. Allow extra products for unexpected delays, for example, airport delays can be common
- Book early and talk to staff about your particular needs
- Book well in advance to reserve an ideal seat, say, on the aisle and nearest the toilets
- Check regarding extra luggage allowance if you're taking a large supply of continence products
- If you've notified airline staff when booking, you can be called onto a plane first — you'll be able to organise yourself carefully and calmly to arrange quick and easy access to your continence products, a change of clothing, and a bathroom wash-kit
- When about to board a bus, make a final toilet visit plus change of continence product to perhaps avoid an on-board change
- For car travel within Australia, planning your toilet stops can ease anxiety: the National Public Toilet Map (www.toiletmap.gov.au) is a great resource

Continence products

- Consider higher-capacity products than normal
- Estimate the product supply you'll need for the trip and order or purchase these well ahead of time
- Double-check the waiting times in between each leg of a journey: total layover/ connection times will add to your need for products
- Pack enough continence products in your carry-on bag to allow for the journey plus possible delays or lost luggage
- If you use a lot of continence products, pack a large carry bag with enough products plus your bathroom bag. Pack one or two products in a handbag or smaller carry bag for immediate handy access — the bulk of your supply can be in an overhead locker
- Pack some plastic bags rolled up tight, or use the special absorbent product disposal bags
- If your stay is to be a long one, rather than carrying all your products with you, order a package of them to go to your holiday accommodation as the delivery address. Contact your destination (e.g. the hotel or your relatives) to hold the package until your arrival

Toilet visits on board

- Sitting down for long periods of time can numb your sensation a bit so it can be easy to not realise you've leaked. Be aware of time elapsed and make a toilet visit even if you feel you don't really need to go
- People on board a plane, train or bus are drinking at the same time and everyone might need the toilet at a similar time, so watch for a lull in toilet-traffic
- During the night you usually need to wee less, but allow for crossing of time zones that disrupt normal body patterns, including urine production
- Some people notice they can flood urine during a plane's landing descent — perhaps due to the change in cabin pressure. For some people, standing up suddenly from a seated (or lying) position can cause flooding too
- It can be a good strategy to change a continence product on the plane prior to landing, before the seat belt sign has been turned on. You might not know what the facilities are like at arrival, how far, or how long you'll have to queue for them
- When flying, change your continence product one last time upon arrival at your destination.
- This will see you dry right through passport control, customs and transport to accommodation. With the long security checks for some flights these days, the wait might be longer than you think!

Some general travel tips

- Choose clothes (dark colours are best) that are easy to remove and comfortable to wear on the trip
- Take along a wash kit plus a change of clothing
- Eat "light" so you won't feel uncomfortable, bloated or queasy: your digestion and "body clock" can be upset with long travel distances
- Be prepared for constipation, vomiting or tummy upsets — talk to your doctor about medicines to take away with you
- Drink plenty of "good" fluids — water is best — air-conditioning is dry and dehydrating.
- Don't be tempted to cut down on fluids to reduce urine leakage — it can make things worse
- Avoid "bladder irritants" such as coffee, tea, alcohol, chocolate drinks, and fizzy soft drinks or sweet "sports" drinks — they might affect you even more than at home. Spicy or acidic foods, like citrus or tomatoes might be best avoided too
- Stretch and walk as much as you can, to help with both circulation and digestion; seated exercises (such as those recommended by airlines) are good too