



## SUMMER DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A BUMMER

### How Your Ostomy Patient Can Also Enjoy The Summer

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Having an ostomy should not prevent your patients from having fun in the sun. It's even more important that the ostomate feels as normal as possible. That being said, there are a few tips and precautions that should be taken as we head into the hot summer months.<sup>1</sup>

Just like the skin, the stoma needs protection from the harmful rays of the sun. During the day the patient should wear tightly woven clothing over the stoma. Caution should be taken if sunscreen is applied near the pouch because lotion can seep under the skin barrier and affect its adherence to the skin.

The pouch should be emptied before swimming. It's acceptable to tape the borders of the skin barrier with water proof tape for extra security. Foods that increase stool output should be avoided for approximately 2-3 hours before the patient gets into the water.

Summer fashion like swimwear and shorts can cause anxiety for the patient because of the increased skin exposure. Body image can be a problem especially for a teen with an ostomy but there are many ways to conceal their appliance. For females the options include a two piece Tankini, a ruffle or skirt around the waist, a swim suit with a bright or textured pattern and/or a bathing suit that has a special lining. For males the options include boxer-style swimming trunks with a lining or they can wear bike shorts underneath their swimsuit. Both genders can wear a long tank top or large t-shirt as well.

As the temperature climbs the risk for dehydration increases especially for the person with an ostomy. It's imperative that the patient gets enough fluids. A good rule of thumb is to drink a glass of liquid whenever the pouch is emptied. Electrolyte drinks and water will help prevent dehydration related to fluid loss better than juices and carbonated beverages. Children participating in outdoor sports should take frequent breaks preferably in the shade or air conditioning and their coaches should monitor for signs of dehydration.

The wear time of the pouching system decreases due to heat, humidity, sweat and activity. The skin barrier should be monitored frequently to make sure it's adhering well especially after outside activities and sweating. Barrier powder can be used to keep the skin under the pouching system dryer. *Care should be taken so that the powder doesn't reach the adhesive border or adherence may be affected.* Drying the pouching area with a hair blower on the cool setting can also be beneficial.

Summer break brings summer travel and there are now more flight restrictions than ever. Ostomy products should be packed in a carry-on bag. Scissors aren't allowed in the cabin, so products should be cut ahead of time. Barrier spray and paste should be allowed but check with the airline before flying<sup>2</sup>. When traveling on the road ostomy products should be stored in a cool, dry place and not left in the car. No matter what the method of travel is, the patient should always carry a letter that has information about their ostomy and bring additional supplies in case of unexpected delays or problems. It's also a good idea for the patient and family to have a list of local medical contacts in the places they are visiting.

Camp is a great support for a child with an ostomy. One annual camp specific for children with an ostomy is the Youth rally. This is where children ages 11-17 come together and meet other young people who deal with similar life experiences. [www.rally4youth.org/](http://www.rally4youth.org/)

There are many ostomy resources on-line. Hollister [www.hollister.com/us/ostomy/hcp/nursing/](http://www.hollister.com/us/ostomy/hcp/nursing/) has a nice collection of both nursing and patient education. The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society [www.wocn.org](http://www.wocn.org) has a free publication: *Pediatric Ostomy Care: Best Practice for Clinicians*. The United Ostomy Association [www.uoaa.org](http://www.uoaa.org) is also a great resource.

<sup>1</sup> If the ostomy is  $\leq 6$  weeks, there may be restrictions and the patient should refer to the surgeon's instructions. Contact sports are not usually permitted. <sup>2</sup> According to the TSA: *medications are allowed in reasonable quantities exceeding 3 ounces and are not required to be in the zip-top bag. Declare these items for inspection at the checkpoint. Officers may need to open these items*