



Travelers' Diarrhea



Key Facts

- Travelers' diarrhea is the most common travel-related illness
- It can happen in any place, but is more common in visitors to Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America
- It is often caused by bacteria spread through unsafe food or water
- In most cases, illness is mild and only lasts for a few days



Images courtesy of G. Flaherty.

This fact sheet was developed by Sarah McGuinness PhD in collaboration with the ISTM Digital Communications Committee.



SYMPTOMS

- Loose or watery stools, stomach cramps, nausea, fever and weakness are common symptoms
- In most cases, symptoms are mild and go away on their own in 3 to 4 days
- Children are at higher risk of dehydration due to fluid loss



PREVENTION

- **Choose your food and drinks wisely:** Eat fully cooked foods served piping hot. Choose drinks in sealed bottles or cans. Avoid raw fruits and vegetables and drinks that contain ice.
- **Brush your teeth with clean water:** Use bottled water or boil tap water for at least one minute (3 minutes at high altitudes)
- **Wash your hands often:** especially after using the toilet and before eating food. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



TREATMENT

- **Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.** Oral rehydration solutions available at pharmacies can help to replace lost salts and minerals
- **Consider over-the-counter drugs like loperamide** to treat diarrhea symptoms
- **Only take antibiotics if needed and as prescribed by a doctor or health professional.** Consider using them only for severe or distressing symptoms
- **See your doctor** if you have severe or persistent symptoms, and ask for a stool test



MORE INFORMATION

Travelers are advised to check official health information from their own country, such as:

- [Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, United States](#)
- [Travel Health Pro, United Kingdom](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

REFERENCES

1. Steff en R, Hill DR, DuPont HL. Traveler's Diarrhea: A Clinical Review. *JAMA*. 2015;313(1):71–80. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2014.17006>
2. Riddle MS, Connor BA, Beeching NJ et al. Guidelines for the prevention and treatment of travelers' diarrhea: a graded expert panel report. *Journal of Travel Medicine*. 2017; 24 (suppl_1):S57–74. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/tax026>



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