

Traveling this summer?

Summer is a great time for travel. We get away from our usual surroundings and enjoy different scenery, different people, and different food. The memories of those trips sometimes will last a lifetime. For 1/3 to 1/2 of us, however, we also manage to pick up some things we would prefer to avoid; namely Travelers' Diarrhea. Those 3 to 5 days of frequent trips to the bathroom can put a real damper on a special time with friends or family. Diarrhea is the most common illness in travelers. Traditionally, we thought this occurred in people traveling from more-developed countries to less-developed areas. While that is still true, well-publicized outbreaks on cruise ships have made the public aware that travelers' diarrhea can occur with a wide variety of travel. Even traveling a different part of the country can occasionally result in an episode. Most travelers do not review medical advice before traveling, so here are a few pointers so your travel is full of enjoyable experiences.

SANTIZE YOUR HANDS often with alcohol gel or foam. If there is any question about a water source, do this even after you wash with soap and water.

AVOID any foods or drinks that are unsealed, un(der)cooked, or in a buffet. That includes ice cubes, open containers of food or drink, and fresh fruits or vegetables.

CONSUME sealed and bottled fluids, dry foods from a sealed container, and hot/cooked food. If it is cold and unsealed, steer clear!

WASH OFF (with sealed-bottled water) and peel fruits and vegetables.

Do **NOT** routinely take antibiotics to **PREVENT** traveler's diarrhea.

DO HAVE A TREATMENT PLAN ready if you develop diarrhea. This routinely includes rehydration with a salt/sugar solution, anti-diarrhea medication, and an antibiotic.

SELF TREATMENT IS EFFECTIVE and rapidly improves symptoms.

People who have problems handling routine infections are an exception and may require preventive antibiotics. .

IF PREVENTIVE MEDICATION IS NEEDED due to immune deficiency, or a critical need to stay well, take medications no longer than 3 weeks. Talk with your doctor about what options there are for you.

CONSIDER probiotics. Recent reviews indicate these may help prevent some travelers' diarrhea but is not recommended for treatment.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE if you have blood with the diarrhea, worsening symptoms despite self treatment, or have a weak immune system.

PLAN AHEAD. Take with your health care providers about your trip. Specific information is also available at www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm.

Have safe and pleasant travels this summer!