

Travelers' Diarrhea

What is it?

Travelers' diarrhea (TD) can be defined with the passage of at least 3 unformed stools in a 24-hour period and at least one of the following symptoms of the disease: abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting or fever. Untreated TD can be expected to last 3-4 days. Travelers' diarrhea responds to antibiotics.

Travelers visiting developing nations are at the highest risk. Travel to rural areas and tropical climates are at higher risk than compared to travel to urban settings and cooler climates. Travelers staying with families or friends are most likely to develop TD.

Protective measures:

1. Drink bottled or boiled water. Heating water to the boiling point (212 degrees) for one minute removes most bacteria, viral and parasitic pathogens. Boiling for 5 minutes should remove all pathogens.
2. Ice can be a source of bacteria. Avoid iced beverages.
3. Eat foods freshly cooked and served hot on dry dishes. Make sure eating utensils are completely dry. One drop of contaminated water can make you sick!
4. Avoid eating salads. Eat fresh fruits that you wash and peel yourself
5. Avoid unpasteurized milk and milk products.
6. Be cautious of food from street vendors.

Treatment:

1. Replacement fluids are essential: Sipping on clear beverages or drinking a rice based oral electrolyte solution (CeraLyte) is the best fluid replacement.
2. Antibiotics (Cipro or Zithromax taken as directed are effective treatments.
3. An anti-diarrheal agent such as Imodium (loperamide) may be taken according to package direction to slow diarrhea until the antibiotic becomes effective. Early treatment can often control TD within 24 hours. Do not use anti-diarrheal alone. It will not kill the offending pathogen and can't slow intestinal motility.
4. For trips of shorter duration (3 wks. or less), Pepto Bismol tabs can be taken to reduce susceptibility to pathogenic bacteria by approximately 65%. Two tablets should be taken before meals and at bedtime. Tablets must be taken at specified times and consistently for the duration on the trip to be effective.

Make a **Diarrhea Kit** to carry with you of the following items:

1. Anti-diarrheal agents (loperamide)
2. Prescribed antibiotic (Cipro or Zithromax)
3. Oral electrolyte replacement (purchase in powder form)
4. Hand sanitizers (alcohol based)