

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHEA

What is Traveller's Diarrhea?

Traveller's Diarrhea is a condition where there is an increase in the frequency of loose or watery bowel movements. There are many causes, including bacteria, viruses and parasites. It is the most frequent health problem encountered by travellers to tropical countries. High-risk destinations include most of the developing countries of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually appear within the first week of travel, but may occur anytime or even after returning home. The diarrhea is commonly associated with stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, fever, and generally feeling unwell. Most cases resolve in one to two days.

How is Traveller's Diarrhea spread?

Many of the organisms that cause diarrhea are passed in the feces from infected persons and animals. The organisms can be found in soil, food, water or on surfaces contaminated with feces. The organisms are spread by person to person contact, by animal to person contact, by eating contaminated food or by drinking contaminated water. Most cases of Traveller's Diarrhea are associated with poor sanitary conditions or poor personal hygiene.

Some examples of how the illness can be spread are:

- Eating food prepared by an infected person that was contaminated by feces found on their unwashed hands;
- Eating vegetables contaminated with human feces that was used as a fertilizer;
- Drinking water contaminated with human sewage.

How is Traveller's Diarrhea diagnosed?

Traveller's Diarrhea is typically diagnosed by a laboratory test of a feces sample. Traveller's Diarrhea may be diagnosed by other methods since there are many causative organisms.

Who is at risk of Traveller's Diarrhea infections?

Anyone who travels to a high-risk destination can get Traveller's Diarrhea.

How can Traveller's Diarrhea be prevented?

Practice good personal hygiene. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet or changing a diaper; after handling animals or contact with animal feces; after handling raw meats; and before preparing or eating food.

Take food safety precautions. Wash and/or peel all raw vegetables and fruits before eating. Thoroughly cook all meats (meat, poultry and seafood). Prevent contact of cooked foods with raw poultry and other meat. Drink and eat only pasteurized dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt and ice cream).

Drink properly treated water. Do not drink tap water or use ice while travelling to a high-risk destination unless the water source has been properly treated. Avoid swallowing recreational waters from swimming pools and hot tubs or when bathing. Do not drink untreated surface water from lakes or streams. Test private well drinking water regularly (once or twice per year).

Get vaccinated. You should get vaccinated if you are travelling to countries where vaccine-preventable diseases occur; and visiting areas where drinking water may be unsafe and poor sanitation and hygiene conditions exist. For further information about vaccine-preventable diseases for international travelers visit your health care provider or consult a pre travel and immunization clinic.

How is Traveller's Diarrhea treated?

Persons with diarrhea should drink a lot of liquids to avoid dehydration, stay home when ill; and practice good personal hygiene like hand washing. Most people recover without specific treatment and there are several non-prescription drugs that can provide relief for symptoms. Consult your health care provider for advice and treatment especially if you have bloody or severe diarrhea.

Further Information

For additional information, contact your family doctor, local [Public Health office](#), or Telecare 811.