

What to do if you get diarrhoea?

Most diarrhoeal attacks are self-limited and clear up in a few days. Diarrhoea may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting and/or fever. **The important thing is to avoid becoming dehydrated. Ensure that you always drink sufficient amounts of fluids**, particularly when travelling in a hot climate. This is extremely important for children. If the child is restless or irritable, or shows signs of strong thirst, or has sunken eyes, or dry skin with reduced elasticity, dehydration is already progressing and immediate medical attention should be sought.

Should bowel movements be very frequent, very watery or contain blood, or last beyond 3 days you should seek medical help. Where there is no medical help available a complete 3-day course of ciprofloxacin* (500 mg twice a day for adults, 15mg/kg twice a day for children) can be taken.

As soon as diarrhoea starts, drink more fluids, such as oral rehydration formula, boiled, treated or bottled water, weak tea, soups or other safe fluids. **Avoid any drinks that tend to remove more water from the body, including coffee, overly sweetened drinks, some medicinal teas and alcohol.**

Age group	Amount of fluids or ORS** to drink
Children less than 2 years	Up to ½ cup after each loose stool
Children 2-10 years	Up to 1 cup after each loose stool
Older children and adults	Unlimited amount

Contrary to common belief, **medicines which reduce bowel movements are not recommended.** In children, these preparations should never be used as they may cause intestinal obstruction.

* generic name - can be sold under other names

** **If ORS are not available, mix 6 teaspoons of sugar plus one level teaspoon of salt in one litre of safe water ("taste of tears") and drink as indicated in the table.**



Each day millions of people become ill and thousands die from a preventable foodborne disease

The advice given in this leaflet is important for every traveller, and of particular importance for high-risk groups i.e. infants and young children, pregnant women, elderly and immunocompromised individuals, including those with HIV/AIDS; persons in these groups are particularly susceptible to foodborne diseases.

Remember: Prevention is better than cure

The WHO Five Keys to Safer Food global message is adapted in this guide to specifically address the health concerns associated with travel.

The Five Keys to Safer Food global message is available at:
www.who.int/foodsafety/consumer/5keys/en



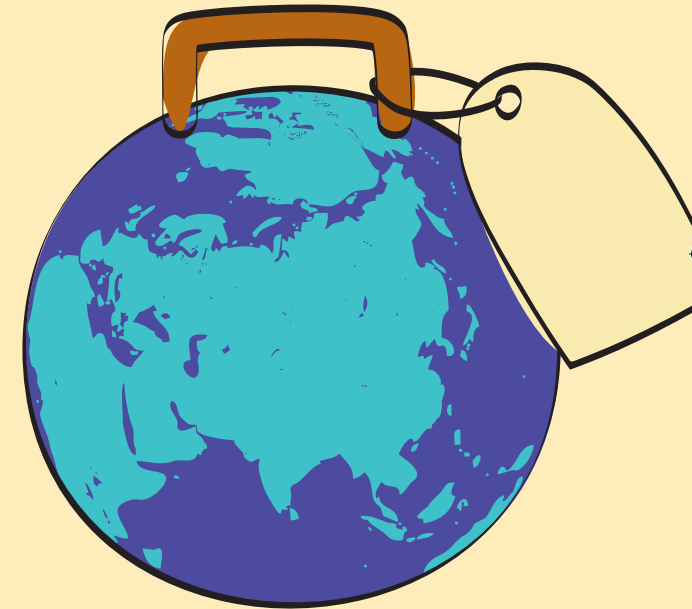
World Health Organization

This document is published by the
 Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases
 E-mail: foodsafety@who.int
 Web site: www.who.int/foodsafety

© World Health Organisation, 2007

A GUIDE ON SAFE FOOD FOR TRAVELLERS

How to avoid illnesses caused by unsafe food and drink and what to do if you get diarrhoea



World Health Organization



Prevention of Foodborne Diseases: Five Keys to Safer Food

Before leaving home consult your physician for advice on the various diseases to which you may be exposed at your destination, and the need for vaccinations or other preventive measures. Make sure you carry in your luggage Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS), and any other medicines you may require during your travel.



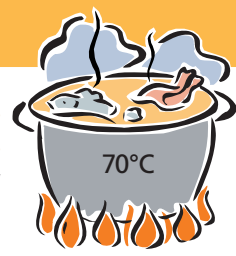
Keep clean



Wash your hands often and always before handling and consuming food.

Dangerous microorganisms are widely found in soil, water, animals and people and can be carried on hands and transferred to food. While visiting food markets, be aware of this when touching raw food and in particular raw meat, and wash hands after handling these foods. These markets often include live animals which can transmit a number of diseases including avian influenza ("bird flu"). Therefore avoid handling or close contact with these animals.

Food should be cooked thoroughly



In general, **make sure your food has been thoroughly cooked and remains steaming hot.** In particular, avoid raw seafood, poultry meat that is still red or where the juices are pink, and minced meat/burgers that are still rare because they contain harmful bacteria throughout. Dangerous microorganisms are killed by proper cooking which is one of the most effective ways to make food safe. However, it is critical that all parts of the food be thoroughly cooked, i.e. reaching 70°C in all parts.

Choose safe water and food

Ice cream, drinking water, ice cubes and raw milk can easily be contaminated with dangerous microorganisms or chemicals if they are made from contaminated ingredients. If in doubt avoid them. **Peel all fruits and vegetables if eaten raw. Avoid those with damaged skin** because toxic chemicals can be formed in damaged and mouldy foods. Green-leafed vegetables (e.g. green salads) can contain dangerous microorganisms which are difficult to remove. If in doubt about the hygienic conditions of such vegetables, avoid them.

If available, bottled water is the safer choice for drinking water but always check the seal to ensure it has not been tampered with. **When the safety of drinking water is doubtful, bring it to a vigorous boil.** This will kill all dangerous microorganisms present. If boiling is not possible, micropore filtering and use of disinfectant agents such as iodine tablets should be considered. Beverages which are either bottled or otherwise packaged are usually safe to drink.



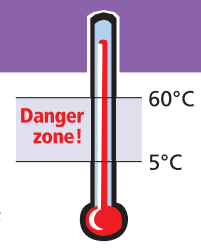
Raw and cooked food should be separated



When frequenting street food vendors or buffets in hotels and restaurants, **make sure that cooked food is not in contact with raw food that could contaminate it. Avoid any uncooked food, apart from fruits and vegetables that can be peeled or shelled.**

Dishes containing raw or undercooked eggs, such as home-made mayonnaise, some sauces and some desserts (e.g. mousse) may be dangerous. Raw food can contain dangerous microorganisms which could contaminate cooked food through direct contact. This may reintroduce disease-causing bacteria into safe, cooked food.

Food should be kept at safe temperatures



Cooked food held at room temperature for several hours constitutes another major risk for food-borne illness. **Avoid these foods at buffets, markets, restaurants and street vendors if they are not kept hot or refrigerated/on ice.** Microorganisms can multiply very quickly if food is stored at room temperature. By holding food refrigerated or on ice (at temperatures below 5°C) or piping hot (above 60°C) the growth of microorganisms is slowed down or stopped.