

15 Aug 2019

Summer Travel 2019: food, water and hygiene reminder

A reminder about the importance of good food, water and personal hygiene during summer travel

Food and water-borne illnesses, including gastroenteritis, which can cause diarrhoea and vomiting are spread in contaminated food and water. Good food, water and personal hygiene measures helps reduce your risk of infection. Contamination is not always visible so precautions are essential.

Advice for travellers

- In countries with poor sanitation, make sure you have access to safe drinking water: boiled and cooled tap water or bottled water with an intact seal.
- Consider ice potentially contaminated, unless it is made from safe water. Avoid ice cream made from unpasteurised milk.
- Avoid buffets and any food left uncovered if they have been standing for a while.
- Always try to choose food served freshly prepared or piping hot; avoid food not freshly prepared.
- Avoid fresh, uncooked berries, unpeeled fruit and salads, as they have all been linked to gastroenteritis.
- Wash your hands after visiting the toilet, changing nappies and before preparing or eating food. Alcohol gel is helpful when hand-washing facilities are not available.
- Swimming pools, the sea, freshwater rivers and lakes can also be a source of infection. In swimming pools, infection may occur if treatment and disinfection of the water is inadequate. Avoid swallowing pool, sea and fresh water.
- Shower before and after swimming.
- To prevent contaminating swimming pool water, do not swim in a pool if you have diarrhoea and/or vomiting until you are symptom free.
- Ensure babies and infants wear suitable swim nappies.

Travellers' diarrhoea usually gets better without treatment. However, get urgent medical advice if you develop a high fever (38°C or more), see blood and/or mucous in diarrhoea, symptoms do not improve in three days or if you get other worrying symptoms such as, severe abdominal pain, jaundice, rash or confusion and report your health problems to hotel reception and your tour operator where appropriate.

Seek help earlier for older people, young children and other vulnerable travellers (such as those who have a compromised immune system), if they unable to drink fluids or are showing signs of dehydration.

See our [food and water hygiene advice](#) and [travellers' diarrhoea factsheet](#) for further information on prevention of diarrhoea and tummy upsets.

After returning home from your trip, if you still have symptoms such as fever, watery diarrhoea, loss of appetite, weight loss, stomach cramps/pain, bloating, increased gas, nausea, fatigue and/or flu-like illness, get medical help and remember to tell your GP where and when you have travelled

abroad.

Destination specific advice, including information on vaccine preventable food and water borne infections is available on our [Country Information pages](#).

Advice for health professionals

Returning travellers with ongoing gastrointestinal symptoms, depending on their history and clinical presentation, may require tests, such as stool microscopy, stool culture, full blood count and/or biochemistry.

If protozoan parasites are considered a possible diagnosis request appropriate tests including stool microscopy for ova cysts and parasites. Testing should be arranged in the usual process through local laboratories, quoting travel history. Confirmed cases should be reported to the local health protection team.

Resources

- [Cyclospora: clinical and travel guidance](#)
- [Hepatitis A](#)
- [NHS: Diarrhoea and vomiting](#)
- [Typhoid](#)
- [Travellers' diarrhoea](#)