

TRAVEL ADVICE SECTION

This section is designed to give to general advice, when travelling abroad. **PLEASE READ IT!** The information will help you to stay healthy on your trip. *However, it is not an alternative substitute to seeing the practice nurse.*

Water

Diseases can be caught from drinking contaminated water, or swimming in it. Unless you know the water supply is safe where you are staying, only use (in order of preference)

1. Boiled water
2. Bottled water or canned drinks
3. Water treated by a sterilising agent.

This includes ice cubes in drinks and water for cleaning your teeth.

Swimming

It is safer to swim in water that is well chlorinated. If you are travelling to Africa, South America or some parts of the Caribbean, avoid swimming in fresh water lakes and streams. You can catch a parasitic disease called schistosomiasis from such places. This disease is also known as bilharzia. It is wise never to go barefoot, but to wear protective footwear when out, even on the beach. Other diseases can be caught from sand and soil, particularly wet soil.

Food

Contaminated food is the commonest source of many diseases abroad. You can help prevent it by following these guidelines :

- Only eat well cooked fresh food
- Avoid leftovers and reheated foods
- Ensure meat is thoroughly cooked
- Eat cooked vegetables, avoid salads
- Only eat fruit you can peel
- Never drink unpasteurised milk
- Avoid ice-cream and shellfish
- Avoid buying food from street vendor's stalls

Two phrases to help you remember

1. Cook It, Peel It, Or Leave It!
2. When In Doubt, Leave It Out!

Personal hygiene

Many diseases are transmitted by what is known as the 'faecal-oral' route. To help prevent this, always wash your hands with soap and clean water after going to the toilet, before eating and before handling food.

Travellers' diarrhoea

This the **most common illness** that you will be exposed to abroad and there is **no vaccine against it!**

Travellers' diarrhoea is caused by eating and/or drinking food and water contaminated by bacteria, viruses or parasites. Risk of illness is higher in some countries than others.

You can certainly help prevent travellers' diarrhoea in the way you behave - make sure you follow the food, water and personal hygiene guidelines already given.

Travellers' diarrhoea is 4 or more loose stools in a 24 hour period often accompanied by stomach pain, cramps and vomiting. It usually lasts 2-4 days and whilst it is not a life threatening illness, it can disrupt your trip for several days. The main danger if the illness is dehydration, and this, if very severe, can kill if it is not treated.

Treatment is therefore rehydration. In severe cases and particularly in young children and the elderly, commercially prepared rehydration solution is extremely useful. This can be bought in tablet or sachet form at a chemist shop e.g. DIORALYTE® or ELECTROLADE®. Prepare according to instructions.

Anti diarrhoeal tablets can be used for adults but should never be used in children under 4 years of age, and only on prescription for children aged 4 to 12 years. Commonly used tablets are IMODIUM® and LOMOTIL®.

None of these tablets should ever be used if the person has a temperature or blood in the stool.

Do contact medical help if the affected person has:-

- A temperature
- Blood in the diarrhoea

- Diarrhoea for more than 48 hours (or 24 hours in children)
- Becomes confused

In very special circumstances, antibiotics are used for diarrhoea, but this decision should only be made by a doctor.

Hepatitis B and HIV infection

These diseases can be transmitted by

1. Blood transfusion
2. Medical procedures with non sterile equipment
3. Sharing of needles (e.g. tattooing, body piercing, acupuncture and drug abuse)
4. Sexual contact. Sexually transmitted diseases are also transmitted by no. 4)

Ways to protect yourself

- Only accept a blood transfusion when essential
- If travelling to a developing country, take a sterile medical kit
- Avoid procedures e.g. ear, body piercing, tattooing and acupuncture
- Avoid casual sex, especially without using condoms

Insect bites

Mosquitoes, certain types of flies, ticks and bugs can cause many different diseases. e.g. malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever. Some bite at night, but some during daytime.

Avoid being bitten by:

- Covering up skin as much as possible if going out at night, (mosquitoes that transmit malaria bite from dusk until dawn). Wear light coloured clothes, long sleeves, trousers or long skirts.

Use insect repellents on exposed skin. (Choose those containing DEET or eucalyptus oil base. A content of approximately 35% DEET is recommended for tropical destinations.) Clothes can be sprayed with repellents too.

Impregnated

- wrist and ankle bands are also available. Check suitability for children on the individual products.
- If room is not air conditioned, but screened, close shutters early evening and spray room with knockdown insecticide spray. In malarious regions, if camping, or sleeping in unprotected accommodation, always sleep under a mosquito net (impregnated with permethrin). Avoid camping near areas of stagnant water, these are common breeding areas for mosquitoes etc.
- Electric insecticide vaporisers are very effective as long as there are no power failures!
- Electric buzzers, garlic and vitamin B are ineffective.

Malaria

If you are travelling to a malarious country, please refer to www.malariahotspots.co.uk
You will have to pay for medication for this.

Animal bites

Rabies is present in many parts of the world. If a person develops rabies, death is 100% certain. There are 3 RULES REGARDING RABIES

1. Do not touch any animal, even dogs and cats
2. If you are licked on broken skin or bitten in a country which has rabies, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for 5 minutes.
3. Seek medical advice IMMEDIATELY, even if you have been previously immunised.

Accidents

Major leading causes of death in travellers are due to swimming and traffic accidents. You can help prevent them by taking the following

Precautionary guidelines

- Avoid alcohol and food before swimming
- Never dive into water where the depth is uncertain
- Only swim in safe water, check currents, sharks, jellyfish etc.
- Avoid alcohol when driving, especially at night
- Avoid hiring motorcycles and mopeds
- If hiring a car, rent a large one if possible, ensure the tyres, brakes and seat belts are in good condition
- Use reliable taxi firms, know where emergency facilities are.

Air travel

It is sensible on any long haul flight to

- Be comfortable in your seat

- Exercise your legs, feet and toes while sitting every half an hour or so and take short walks whenever feasible. Upper body and breathing exercises can further improve circulation
 - Drink plenty of water and be sensible about alcohol intake which in excess leads to dehydration
- 2 working days notice. Alternatively, you may post your request including a self addressed stamped envelope.

Whenever possible, incoming telephone calls will be answered within 1 minute. At the busiest times (between 9.15 and 10.30am) all lines may be engaged and patients are requested to leave non-urgent calls until later.

Patients seeking advice between 6:30pm and 8:00am will receive a clinically appropriate response from Camidoc. Remember that this is an emergency service for conditions that are too serious to wait until the next working day.