

Traveller's Diarrhea

Enjoying food and drink from different parts of the world is one of the most exciting aspects of travelling. Traveller's diarrhea affects 30-70% of travellers depending on the destination. Bacteria are the most common cause, but viruses, protozoa and pre-formed toxins can also be responsible.

Symptoms may range from mild cramps and urgent loose stools to severe abdominal pain, fever, vomiting and bloody diarrhea. Depending on the responsible pathogen, it can last 2-7 days or even longer.

Prevent traveller's diarrhea by making careful food choices. Cooked food needs to be piping hot. Raw foods, such as salads or fruit, should not be washed with local water but bottled water. Avoid beverages that are made with local water or have ice added. See the Food and Water Precautions handout for more recommendations.

Most cases of traveller's diarrhea are mild and go away on their own. Antibiotics are reserved for treatment of moderate or severe cases of diarrhea. It is also very important to stay hydrated if experiencing any diarrhea. Bring along oral rehydration salt packets or make your own: 1L bottled/purified water + ½ teaspoon of salt + 6 teaspoons of sugar.

Treatment Recommendations for Traveller's Diarrhea	
<u>Mild diarrhea</u> Diarrhea that is tolerable, not distressing and does not interfere with planned activities	Treat with Loperamide (Imodium) or Pepto Bismol if needed. Antibiotic treatment is not recommended.
<u>Moderate diarrhea</u> Diarrhea that is distressing or interferes with planned activities	Loperamide (Imodium) can be used along with prescribed antibiotic therapy.
<u>Severe diarrhea</u> Diarrhea that is bloody, incapacitating or completely prevents planned activities	Treat with prescribed antibiotics. Loperamide (Imodium) may be used as well. Seek medical care if there is significant blood in the stools.