

Food and Water Advice Sheet



Contaminated food and water can spread a number of different diseases such as traveller's diarrhoea, typhoid, hepatitis A and cholera

When travelling abroad particularly in countries where sanitation is poor it is important to follow strict food and water precautions and pay careful attention to personal hygiene to reduce the risk of infection.

It can be difficult to avoid contaminated food and water, but it is sensible to try and reduce your risk by following the steps below.

Wash your hands regularly:

Always wash your hands before preparing or eating food and after using the toilet, changing nappies or following contact with animals or sick people. Alcohol hand gels can be useful when hand-washing facilities are not available.



Avoid contaminated water:

In some parts of the world, tap water is not available or is unsafe to drink. If you have any doubts about the water available for drinking, preparing (washing) food or for cleaning your teeth; boil it, sterilise it with disinfectant tablets or use bottled water.

Avoid ice unless you are sure it is made from treated and chlorinated water. This includes ice used to keep food cool as well as ice in drinks.

It is usually safe to drink tea or coffee made with boiling water and drinks served in unopened factory produced cans or bottles such as carbonated drinks, beer, wine, commercially prepared fruit drinks, water and pasteurised drinks. These can generally be considered safe.



Always check that the seal on the bottle or container is tamper proof and intact. Be aware that bottled water may not be suitable for babies due to high salt and mineral content. Bottle feeds should be made up with boiled, cooled water.

Beware of fake bottled water and avoid any product that you think the seal may have been tampered with.

Boiling water for at least one minute if you need to disinfect it will kill all of the common water borne bugs. Chemical treatments can also be used to disinfect water. Talk to a chemist or pharmacist for advice and follow manufacturer's instructions carefully to obtain the best results.

Avoid contaminated food:

Where possible choose freshly prepared food that is thoroughly cooked and is served piping hot. Avoid foods which have been kept warm, allowed to stand at ambient room temperatures, such as open buffets.

Many countries use human waste to fertilise their crops and foods that grow close to the ground are often contaminated with harmful bacteria. Uncooked food including salads, fruit and vegetables should be avoided, unless you can peel it yourself like bananas or oranges.

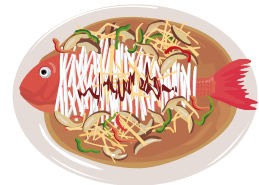


Avoid milk, yogurt, cheese and other dairy products that have not been pasteurised.

Avoid foods that are potentially unsafe:

Certain foods are prone to higher risks of contamination and generally should be avoided.

- Food left exposed to flies, such as open buffets.
- Reheated food or food that has been allowed to stand at room temperature in a warm environment especially rice, meat or fish
- Raw food like salads, fruit and vegetables, unless you can peel it yourself.
- Undercooked or raw fish, meat or shellfish
- Street food or takeaways, unless cooked fresh
- Unpasteurised dairy products including Ice cream from unreliable sources, such as street traders and kiosks.



Remember:

- ❖ **Boil it**
- ❖ **Cook it**
- ❖ **Peel it**
- ❖ **or Forget it!**

Recreational water:

Some illnesses such as gastrointestinal infections, legionnaires disease, leptospirosis, and schistosomiasis (a disease caused by parasitic worms), can be contracted by ingesting, inhaling or having contact with contaminated water while wading or swimming in oceans, rivers and lakes, swimming pools and hot tubs.

You can reduce the risk of infection by following the advice below:

- Only swim in chlorinated water or water which is unlikely to be contaminated with sewage. Children and adults with diarrhoea should not swim in water if unwell to avoid contaminating it and infecting others.
- Some bacteria's for example legionella can multiply in warm water where levels of disinfectant are not properly maintained. Avoid recreational water facilities like hot tubs if the water is visibly cloudy.
- Avoid swimming with open cuts, abrasions or other wounds that may allow bacteria or viruses to gain entry and try not to swallow any water whilst swimming or participating in recreational water activities. If swimming in freshwater, wear a nose clip and try not to submerge your face or head.
- Do not bath or wade in water in schistosomiasis-endemic areas of the Caribbean, South America, Africa and Asia or in water that may be contaminated with human or animal excrement, particularly if near storm drains, after heavy rain fall.



Further information for travellers is available from:

National Travel Health Network and Centre – Food and Water Hygiene
http://www.nathnac.org/travel/misc/travellers_food.htm

Public Health England - Travellers Diarrhoea
<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/TravellersDiarrhoea/>

NHS Choices – Preventing Norovirus
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Norovirus/Pages/Prevention.aspx>

World Health Organization (WHO) – Food Safety
<http://www.who.int/foodsafety/en/>

This leaflet has been prepared by Sanofi Pasteur MSD to provide general information on issues relating to healthy travel. It is not meant as an alternative to individual advice and should be used in conjunction with advice provided for you by a health care professional.

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