



How to Avoid Stomach Problems in Less Developed Countries

One of the biggest concerns when traveling overseas is becoming sick from eating food and drinking water that has been contaminated by microorganisms. Even in developed countries, tap water will often make foreign tourists ill. In less developed countries, both food and water present a danger to travelers. If you're thinking of traveling abroad, you should learn a few rules that should keep you from becoming ill during your trip.

Steps

- 1 Boil untreated tap water for 1 minute to kill harmful microorganisms and make drinking safe.** The safest drinks are those that have been boiled, such as coffee or tea. All microorganisms are killed in temps above 200 degrees.
- 2 Never add ice to any drink, and don't use tap water to brush your teeth.**
- 3 Stick to bottled beverages, including soft drinks, bottled beer, wine and bottled water, but only if the containers have been brought to you unopened.**
 - Be sure to check the seal on bottled water to make sure someone hasn't refilled the bottle with tap water.
 - Dry off any containers that are wet, since they may have been stored in ice made from tap water.
- 4 Make water safe to drink by adding chlorine or iodine.** You can find water treatment tablets at sporting goods stores, since they are often used by campers, at pharmacies or stores that cater to travelers.
- 5 Use water filter systems.** Take care to buy a filter that will adequately clean the water in the place you are visiting and rigorously follow the instructions for using and maintaining the filter.
- 6 Cook all food and never eat raw food, like salads, when visiting less developed countries.** Make sure that all meals you are served come to you piping hot so you can be sure they've been cooked well enough to kill any microorganisms. Avoid dairy products, which may not have been pasteurized, and shellfish.
 - Some developed countries do not pasteurize their dairy products, so never assume that dairy products are safe to eat.
- 7 Don't buy or eat food from any place that has a lot of flies.**
- 8 Never buy food from a street vendor.** You have no way to ensure that vendors follow any kind of standard for preparing and storing the food they sell. In many countries, the government doesn't regulate them.
- 9 Avoid fresh fish, as it may have natural toxins in the flesh.** Check on what fish is available in the place you're visiting and whether any of them are high-risk due to toxins. Avoid this kind of fish, but feel free to eat other kinds as long as they're thoroughly cooked.
- 10 Peel all fresh fruit.** Washing the fruit in tap water will only introduce microorganisms. Peel the fruit carefully so the outside of the peel doesn't touch the fruit and wash your hands after peeling.

Tips

- If you do eat something you shouldn't, you will probably get what's called traveler's diarrhea, which will run its course in about a week. It's rarely life-threatening. While you can get antimicrobial drugs that may help, you can often feel better just by resting, drinking plenty of safe fluids and eating salted crackers. If you start vomiting, have bloody diarrhea, become dehydrated or have a fever, seek immediate medical attention.

Sources and Citations

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- <http://www.usaflightinsurance.com/articles/international-travel/know-your-risks-when-traveling-to-third-world-countries.htm>

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