



TRAVEL TIPS for RISKS from FOOD AND WATER

Contaminated food and water are common sources for the introduction of infection into the body, including bacterial dysentery, cholera, typhoid fever, and viral infections such as hepatitis A and parasitic diseases such as giardia and amoeba. Travelers to international destinations should take precautions against food and water-borne illness.

WATER

Water that has been adequately chlorinated will provide significant protection against viral and bacterial waterborne diseases but may not kill some enteric viruses and the parasitic organisms that cause giardiasis and amoebiasis. In areas where the purity of tap water is uncertain, or where hygiene and sanitation are poor, travelers should be advised that only the following may be **safe to drink**:

- **canned or bottled carbonated beverages**, including carbonated bottled water and soft drinks
- **tea and coffee**, made with boiling water
- **beer and wine.**

Where water may be contaminated, **avoid**:

- Ice cubes
- tap water, even for brushing your teeth
- locally bottled or uncapped bottled water

It is safer to drink directly from a can or bottle than from a questionable container. Water on the outside of cans or bottles should be dried before being opened and surfaces which are contacted directly by the mouth in drinking should first be wiped clean.

TREATING WATER FOR DRINKING

Boiling is by far the best method to make water of uncertain purity safe for drinking:

- Bring the water to a vigorous boil. Allow to cool to room temperature – do not add ice.

Chemical disinfection by iodine is an alternative method of water treatment, and many people use tetraglycine hydroperiodide tablets (Potable Agua, Coghlan's, etc.) available at pharmacies and sporting good stores. Follow the manufacturers' instructions. If the water is cold or cloudy, the number of tablets should be doubled. Cloudy water should also be strained through a clean cloth into a container to remove any sediment or floating matter, and then treated with heat or iodine.

As a last resort, if no source of safe drinking water is available or can be obtained, tap water that is uncomfortably hot to touch is usually safe. After allowing such hot water to cool to room temperature in a thoroughly cleaned container, it may be used for brushing teeth, as well as for drinking.

Water filters: Be sure to look for one that both purifies and filters the water and is rated for international travel. At this time no ratings are available about which ones are truly effective.

FOOD: It is generally safe to eat food that has been cooked well and served hot, or fruits/vegetables that have been peeled by the traveler.

To avoid illness, always wash your hands before preparing or eating meals. Food should be selected with care. All raw food is subject to contamination and in areas where hygiene and sanitation is inadequate, the traveler should **avoid**:

- salads or uncooked vegetables/fruits
- unpasteurized milk and milk products
- undercooked and raw meat, eggs, fish and shellfish.

Some species of fish and shell fish can contain poisonous toxins, even when well cooked. The most common type of fish poisoning in travelers is ciguatera fish poisoning. Red snapper, grouper, barracuda, amberjack, sturgeon fish, sea bass, and a wide range of tropical reef fish contain the toxin at unpredictable times. The potential for ciguatera poisoning exists in all subtropical and tropical insular areas of the West Indies, Pacific and Indian Oceans where the tropical species are consumed. The only effective preventive measure to avoid this poisoning is to **avoid eating tropical reef fish.**



