



## Frequently Asked Questions about Travelers' Diarrhea



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### HOW TO PREVENT TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA ?

Travelers' diarrhea is caused by a pathogen in unclean food or drink.

#### Here are some useful tips:

- Avoid eating food or drinking beverages of uncertain origin.
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meat or seafood.
- Avoid unpasteurized dairy products.
- Don't drink tap water.
- Bottled water is probably safe, but make sure the cap and seal are not broken.
- Bottled carbonated beverages and canned drinks are normally safe.

### WHERE CAN I SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF I HAVE DIARRHEA ?

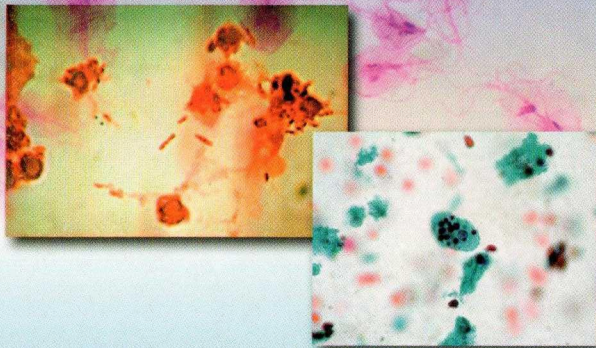
All hospitals in Thailand can take care of travelers' diarrhea. Most patients can be treated as outpatients but some patients may need hospitalization.

In our clinic, all patients will be requested to collect their stool to check for the pathogen. You may collect your stool before attending our clinic. Use a small plastic container as a collecting device.

### WHAT IS TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA ?

Travelers' diarrhea is the most common illness affecting travelers. Most cases occur in developing countries of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In Thailand, the prevalence of travelers' diarrhea is much lower nowadays, due to better sanitary conditions.

### WHAT CAUSES TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA ?



Germ in unclean food or drink can cause travelers' diarrhea. The most common causative agent is enterotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (ETEC). Other pathogens can also cause travelers' diarrhea, such as *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, *Vibrio* spp., as well as many kinds of intestinal parasites.

### WHAT ARE THE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA ?

The onset of diarrhea usually occurs within the first week of travel, but it may occur at any time while traveling or shortly after you get home.

Diarrhea usually occurs abruptly. The illness results in increasing frequency and amount of loose or watery stool. It usually causes 5-10 bowel movements each day. Other common symptoms are abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, bloating, and fever.

### WHAT IS THE NATURAL COURSE OF DISEASE ?

Even without treatment, travelers' diarrhea usually subsides within 2-5 days. Most cases are mild. Some cases having dehydration, fatigue and high-grade fever may require hospitalization.

### WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA ?

Whenever possible, you should have your stool checked to find the causative pathogen. Most travelers' diarrhea is treated with appropriate antibiotics and supportive treatment. Oral rehydration is recommended to replace lost fluid and electrolytes. Hospitalized cases usually require intravenous fluid rehydration.

### WHAT ABOUT ANTIMOTILITY DRUGS ?

Antimotility agents (e.g. loperamide) can reduce diarrhea by slowing the bowel movement. Since diarrhea is the body's defense mechanism to get rid of the pathogen from the gastrointestinal tract, therefore antimotility agents may reduce the clearance of the pathogen and lead to systemic toxicity in the patient. However, these agents may be useful in reducing diarrhea while traveling.

**Never use these drugs in patients with fever or mucous-bloody stool.** Medical consultation is needed.



### IS THERE ANY DRUG THAT CAN BE USED TO PREVENT TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA ?

Taking antibiotics to prevent diarrhea is **not recommended**. Routine antimicrobial prophylaxis increases the risk of adverse reactions to the traveler and may increase the resistance of the organism.