

Physician offers advice for preventing traveler's diarrhea

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Traveler's diarrhea is a common and uncomfortable digestive tract disorder that can affect people when they travel to new environments. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, up to 70%

of travelers experience episodes. It's typically caused by eating contaminated food or water.

Dr. Jesse Bracamonte, a Mayo Clinic family medicine physician, says traveler's diarrhea is not usually serious, but can be highly unpleasant. He offers strategies to help you stay healthy and avoid it.

When you are on an adventure, the last thing you want is a bathroom emergency.

"When travelers are traveling abroad, they may experience traveler's diarrhea," says Bracamonte. "That usually is related to being exposed to [bacteria](#), [viruses](#) or sometimes [parasites](#) when in a new country, and eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water."

Symptoms can begin suddenly.

"Anywhere from loose, watery stools of up to like three stools per day; abdominal cramping; sometimes a low-grade fever; and sometimes nausea," explains Bracamonte.

Preventing illness is key. Start with eating properly cooked food and drinking sanitized water.

"There's an old adage: 'Cook it, boil it, peel it or forget it.'"

Whether on a cruise, eating at a buffet or from a street vendor, take precautions.

"Things that you can do to sometimes prevent it is drinking lots of fluids, making sure that you wash your hands adequately and, in some instances, having bismuth subsalicylate — either the pink tabs or the pink liquid — available sometimes helps," Bracamonte says.

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