



July 2011

Community and Health Services Department



# Travellers' Diarrhea

## What is Travellers' Diarrhea?

Diarrhea is the most frequent illness among travellers. It can develop after eating food or drinking beverages that are contaminated with bacteria, viruses or parasites.

In addition to having frequent bouts of diarrhea, the infected person may have a fever, cramps, nausea, vomiting, bloating and a general feeling of being unwell. In severe cases there may be blood and/or pus in the stool. Symptoms usually last less than five days.

## How is Travellers' Diarrhea prevented?

Travellers' Diarrhea can be prevented through careful selection and preparation of food and drink, thorough handwashing, and in some cases through medication.

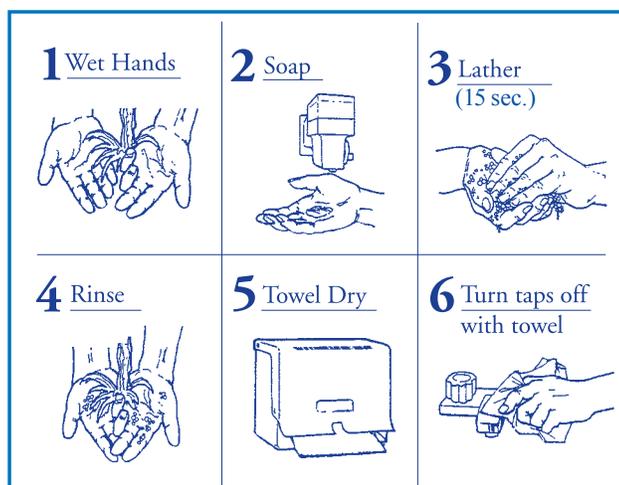
### I. Select and prepare food and drink carefully

- Eat only food that is well-cooked and still hot when served. Buffets should be served at the proper temperature (i.e. hot foods served hot and cold foods served cold)
- Drink only purified water that has been boiled or disinfected with chlorine or iodine, or commercially bottled water in sealed containers. Tea, coffee, bottled or canned drinks, and carbonated drinks without ice (including beer) are usually safe
- Avoid ice, unless it has been made with purified water
- Avoid unpasteurized dairy products and ice cream
- Avoid uncooked foods - especially shellfish - and salads
- Avoid raw fruits and vegetables unless you have peeled them
- Avoid food from street vendors

**Remember: boil it, peel it, cook it or leave it!**

For further information, please call:  
**York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653**  
**TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)**

2. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating or drinking, using the six-step method in the diagram.



3. Consult with your physician about medications

- An oral vaccine is available. Ask your physician if you should take it before you travel
- If warranted, your physician may prescribe antibiotics for self-treatment in case you develop travellers' diarrhea while you are away

## How is Travellers' Diarrhea treated?

Stop eating food, and drink clear fluids containing some sugar (e.g., fruit juices, carbonated beverages), clear soups (broth), gastrolyte, or tea. Avoid milk products during and after a bout of diarrhea. Over the counter drugs (e.g., Imodium, Lomotil or Pepto Bismol) may help and are safe as long as the diarrhea remains non-bloody.

Seek medical treatment if symptoms last more than 48 hours, especially if there is a fever of more than 38.9 °C (102 °F), or blood or pus is in the stool. Children under two years of age should receive medical care as soon as possible. Antibiotics may be used in severe cases of diarrhea (e.g., if there is blood and/or pus in stools).

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