

# Food and Water Safety While Traveling Abroad

## Choose Foods Wisely

Especially in areas where hygiene and sanitation are inadequate, assume that all raw foods may be contaminated. Avoid salads, uncooked vegetables and raw, peeled fruits, unpasteurized milk and milk products (including cheese). Choose cooked foods that are still hot, and fruits and vegetables that the traveler has peeled personally if they will be eaten raw. Consider these facts:

- Undercooked and raw meat, fish and shellfish can carry intestinal pathogens.
- Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at room temperature may be contaminated by bacteria and should be thoroughly reheated before serving.
- Food and drink purchased from a street vendor is more likely to cause illness.

## Make Sure Beverages Are Safe

In areas where chlorinated tap water is not available or where hygiene and sanitation are poor, choose these beverages:

- Bottled or canned carbonated beverages;
- Bottled juice or water from trusted sources; Juice that has been reconstituted from water that is contaminated would not be safe.
- Hot tea or coffee made with boiled water;
- Beer and wine;
- Infant formula prepared from commercial powder and boiled water for infants that are not breastfed.

Boiling is by far the most reliable method to make water of uncertain purity safe for drinking. Water should be brought to a vigorous rolling boil for 1 minute and allowed to cool to room temperature. Do not add ice. At altitudes above 6,562 feet, water should be boiled for 3 minutes. To improve the taste of boiled water, add a pinch of salt or pour the water several times from one clean container to another.

In places where water might be contaminated, ice should also be considered contaminated and should not be used in beverages. It is safer to drink directly from the original can or bottle than to transfer the beverage to a questionable container. However, if ice has been in contact with containers used for drinking, thoroughly clean the containers, preferably with soap and hot water, before drinking. Always dry the outside of cans or bottles that are wet, and wipe clean the surfaces with which the mouth will have direct contact.

Avoid brushing teeth with tap water in places where water may be contaminated.

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information in the handout is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional. It is advised that all people of any age consult a healthcare professional prior to traveling outside the U.S.A.