

Travel Advice

Food Safety and Hygiene



Overview

It is disappointing to have “stomach problems” when you travel, play and compete overseas.

Stomach problems, food borne diseases, diarrhea and even food poisoning can, and will probably occur at some time for people who regularly travel, so you need to take some basic precautions with food and water safety and personal hygiene.

Common sense, good hygiene and knowledge of some simple facts can help you prevent most stomach problems.

Here is some advice that will help you to reduce the risk of problems.

Peel it, boil it or drop it!

When travelling, in particular in tropical countries, you can prevent most stomach problems and diarrhea by doing the following:

- Washing your hands frequently. Always wash your hands thoroughly before eating. Use hand disinfection gels or tissues if you cannot wash your hands or if you are not sure the water is clean.
- Peel any fruit - and do it yourself! You do not know who harvested or handled the fruit before you got it.
- Eat HOT or recently and thoroughly boiled/fried food – bacteria are rapidly killed at temperatures above 70 degrees centigrade.
- Stay away from raw vegetables and salads as well as berries fresh or frozen – sometimes they are washed with contaminated water.

Be very careful with these...

- **Water Quality** - tap water, in many parts of the world is a prime source of stomach problems. Even when the water is clean, the water pipes may be less clean and not well maintained. Make sure you let the cold water run from the tap until it is indeed cold. Use bottled water even to clean your teeth.
- **Ice cubes** – as they are often made from tap water, and ice machines are not always kept sufficiently clean. Some bacteria can survive temperatures below zero.
- **Raw foods** - such as raw fish and shellfish (sushi) as well as raw eggs.
- **Salads** - with mayonnaise, and ice cream unless prepacked from the factory.
- **Lukewarm food** - from a street kitchen or hotel buffet. Bacteria multiply quickly between 15 and 70 degrees centigrade.

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You can drink

- Mineral water from sealed bottles, preferably carbonated as that contravenes growth of any remaining bacteria.
- Carbonated soft drinks.
- Tea and coffee.

You can eat

You can avoid most problems if you stick to:

- Thoroughly and freshly cooked foods.
- Dry food such as bread.
- Whole pieces of meat rather than minced meat, as bacteria are mostly on the surface of meat.
- Pre-packed dairy products.

Take your own?

- It is generally not advisable to take your own food from home. In many countries it is even illegal to import food, due to the risk of spreading food borne diseases. It is also difficult and therefore risky try to ensure that food is kept clean and cold while travelling

Before you leave home

- Ensure you have the right vaccinations for your destinations. Hepatitis A may e.g. be caused by food borne virus

Diarrhea will happen – be prepared !

Despite your precautions, if you catch a stomach problem with diarrhea or vomiting, do not despair – most cases will be over in a day or two, or even faster, but may of course damage your badminton performance.

- Drink to flush out the bacteria or virus from your body.
- Be careful with medications – be sure not to take anything containing drugs on the WADA list of prohibited substances. Safest choice is to take your own medications checked by your own doctor.
- Imodium may stop the diarrhea, but will not treat the cause.
- Should your problem not get better in a couple of days or should you also catch a fever or have blood in your diarrhea, do not hesitate to call for medical assistance, as you may need antibiotics.
- Take utmost care with your personal hygiene to avoid re-contaminating yourself or your colleagues