

A photograph of three lit sparklers against a dark blue night sky. The sparklers are in the foreground, with their bright orange and yellow sparks creating a bokeh effect in the background. The overall mood is celebratory and festive.

Public & Global Health Spotlight

Best of 2024
Issue 6

Dear readers,

welcome to this special edition of our magazine Public & Global Health Spotlight!

After taking a publishing break last year, we're all the more excited to now present you with a very special issue: the Best of 2024!

In this edition, you'll find the four most-read blog articles of the year. They're topics that sparked particular interest and also show just how diverse and practical travel medicine can be.

What should you do if you get traveler's diarrhea? How can you protect yourself from parasites in food and water? What should pregnant people know about whooping cough? And just how dangerous can tick bites really be?

These are questions that concern not only frequent travelers, but everyone who takes responsibility — for their own health and the health of those around them, whether at home or abroad.

We hope you enjoy reading!

Index



Pertussis: What Is It and What Do Pregnant Women Need to Know?

It's scary whenever a newborn is ill, but whooping cough can be scarier than most infections. This is because whooping cough can make it hard for babies to breathe, which may require hospitalization.

04



Deadly Tick Bites: Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Have you ever heard of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever? It received its name as it was first recognized in the "Rocky Mountain" states of the United States. However, its distribution includes almost all states of the US, Canada, Mexico, as well as Central and South America.

07



When Food and Water Become Dangerous: How to Avoid Parasites

Parasitic infections have been around for far longer than we have, and even Hippocrates—the 'father of medicine' who created the first version of the Hippocratic oath—described various diseases that may have been caused by parasites.

10



Traveler's Diarrhea: What Is It and How Do You Prevent It?

When you're traveling, there's so much to take in—new sights, new people, new customs, new history—but the favorite for many people is the food! However, you need to be careful with food and drinks if you don't want to become closely acquainted with the bathroom.

13

Pertussis: What Is It and What Do Pregnant Women Need to Know?

The moment someone finds out they are pregnant, their world shifts. Now, no longer are they only looking out for themselves, but they are also doing everything they can to protect their baby. Many times, though, what is best for the baby is also best for the soon-to-be mom. Such is the case for protection from pertussis, also known as whooping cough. This very contagious bacteria infects the respiratory system and is especially dangerous in babies. In some cases, it can even be deadly. Whooping cough can be severe, but the good news is that women who are pregnant can help protect their baby by getting the pertussis vaccine.



Pertussis In Infants

It's scary whenever a newborn is ill, but whooping cough can be scarier than most infections. This is because whooping cough can make it hard for babies to breathe, which may require hospitalization.

Whooping cough is so dangerous for infants because they do not gain protection against it until they are two months old, which is when they can be vaccinated against it. Before that time, babies are at the highest risk of getting very sick if exposed to pertussis.

Symptoms of Pertussis

If you're pregnant or just gave birth, knowing the signs of pertussis is crucial for keeping your baby away from anyone ill or getting them to a doctor quickly if they show symptoms.

Always be sure to see a doctor if you, your child, or anyone else in your family are:

- coughing violently
- struggling to breathe
- coughing over and over
- turning blue or purple
- not drinking enough fluids

However, it's important to note that many babies with whooping cough don't cough at all. Instead, their most prominent symptom is struggling to breathe, which may cause them to turn blue or purple.

How Pertussis Spreads

Whooping cough can easily spread from one person to another, which is why it is important to be proactive against this infection.

Pertussis results from the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*, which attaches to the cilia (small, hair-like structures) that line the upper respiratory system. Once attached, the bacteria releases toxins that damage the cilia and cause the airways to swell, which can make it difficult for infants to breathe.

Even worse, the bacteria responsible for whooping cough easily spreads from person to person through the air. When someone sick with whooping cough sneezes or coughs, they can release small particles with the bacteria. If your baby breathes in these particles, they can then become sick.

Coughing and sneezing is not the only way that it spreads, though. Whooping cough can also spread when you're close together or share breathing space, such as if you hold your baby on your chest. This is why babies most often catch pertussis from a family member.

As for how long you can be contagious with whooping cough, the answer is quite a while. People can start spreading the bacteria as soon as they display the first symptoms. Unfortunately, the first symptoms often resemble a cold. Because of this, some people may never know that they have whooping cough, making them more likely to spread it to others. However, just because the illness is mild in them does not mean that it will be mild in a baby.

Additionally, once the coughing begins, someone can continue to spread whooping cough for at least 2 weeks, maybe longer. One way to shorten the time you're contagious is by taking antibiotics early in your illness, but this does not erase all contagiousness.

You and your baby's best option is to prevent pertussis, and you can do this through the pertussis vaccine.

The Pertussis Vaccine

There are different types of vaccines that provide protection against pertussis.

Since infants cannot get the vaccine until they are two months old, it is recommended for women to receive a vaccination during the second trimester (13. - 26) until the beginning of the third trimester each time they are pregnant. The vaccine is very safe for both mom and baby. There is no increased risk of pregnancy complications if you get the vaccine.

If your baby still gets whooping cough, these antibodies help to make it a milder case. One study found that babies whose mothers received the vaccine during pregnancy were less likely to need hospital or ICU care, and the lengths of stay in these facilities, when necessary, were also shorter. In short, getting the pertussis vaccine during your pregnancy can give your baby the best possible chance of fighting this illness should they be exposed to it.

Routine Vaccination Check: Routine vaccinations and consultation, without travel

By vaccinating yourself against infectious diseases, you can protect both yourself and those around you. Before each birthday, a new job in the medical field, or if it has just been a while, there's one essential question to ask yourself: are my vaccinations up to date?

Fortunately, as part of our routine vaccination consultation, we can do a full assessment of your records and compare your vaccination status with the vaccination recommendations in Switzerland. For patients without vaccination records, we can use the latest antibody testing to determine how well your body is protected.



https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/routine_vaccination_check

It's Not "One and Done"

Because the amount of antibodies to whooping cough decreases in the body over time, it is recommended for women to get a vaccine each time they are pregnant; that way, they can offer each baby the greatest amount of protection.

Protect Yourself, Protect Your Baby

Pregnant women wanting to keep their baby safe should look into the pertussis vaccine, which is recommended during pregnancy. By receiving it at this time, moms have time to build up pertussis antibodies in their body and pass them on to their baby, offering them extra protection against whooping cough until they can get vaccinated at 2 months.

While the pertussis vaccine is recommended for all pregnant women, even if this is not your first pregnancy, other vaccines are also recommended for pregnant women, especially those who are planning to travel. To stay on top of your health and keep your baby healthy as well, book an appointment for a routine vaccination check at our Travel Clinic UZH and allow our team to help you keep you and your baby healthy.

References

- Skoff TH, Deng L, Bozio CH, Hariri S. US Infant Pertussis Incidence Trends Before and After Implementation of the Maternal Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis Vaccine. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 2023;177(4):395-395. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2022.5689>
- Boulet SL, Chamberlain AT, Biswas HH, Jamieson DJ. Trends in Infant Pertussis Hospitalizations in the United States, 2009-2017. *JAMA*. 2019;322(21):2134-2136. doi:10.1001/jama.2019.15577
- Abu-Raya B, Forsyth K, Halperin SA, et al. Vaccination in Pregnancy against Pertussis: A Consensus Statement on Behalf of the Global Pertussis Initiative. *Vaccines (Basel)*. 2022;10(12):1990. Published 2022 Nov 23. doi:10.3390/vaccines10121990
- Libster R, Edwards KM. How can we best prevent pertussis in infants?. *Clin Infect Dis*. 2012;54(1):85-87. doi:10.1093/cid/cir780
- Gayatri Amirthalingam, Andrews N, Campbell H, et al. Effectiveness of maternal pertussis vaccination in England: an observational study. *The Lancet*. 2014;384(9953):1521-1528. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(14\)60686-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(14)60686-3)

Deadly Tick Bites: Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

You're likely aware of the diseases transmitted by ticks here in Europe. But have you ever heard of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF)? It is one of the deadliest among the tick bite transmitted diseases. It received its name as it was first recognized in the "Rocky Mountain" states of the United States. However, its distribution includes almost all states of the US, Canada, Mexico, as well as Central and South America. Let's explore RMSF further and see what we can do to protect ourselves from tick bites, in general.



What is Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever?

RMSF is a bacterial disease caused when the bacterium *R. rickettsii* enters the bloodstream through the bite of an infected tick. Once there, the bacteria enter and replicate in the cells of the inner lining of small blood vessels. This causes damage to the affected cells leading to inflammation (vasculitis) and blood clots (thrombi) that can block the affected vessels. As the Rickettsia spread through the bloodstream they affect multiple organs such as skin, heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, liver and spleen, leading to diverse signs and symptoms. Since the bacteria also affects the central nervous system, its symptoms can be grave.

RMSF is spread by three types of ticks: the Rocky Mountain wood tick, the American dog tick, and the brown dog tick. Combined, the territories of these three ticks cover most of the United States and the bordering countries, including Canada and Mexico. They have also spread down to South America. So visitors to the Americas must pay attention

to good tick bite protection. Additionally, knowing the symptoms of RMSF can help you seek treatment early, which may be the difference between life and death.

Signs and Symptoms of RMSF

Symptom onset of RMSF varies between two days to two weeks after a bite by an infected tick. Early symptoms can include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, weakness, and muscle pains. Within three days, about 50% of people with RMSF develop a rash that typically starts at the ankles and wrists and then spreads to other parts of the body. However, it's important not to wait for the rash before seeking treatment, as it does not develop in everyone with RMSF!

Further symptoms of RMSF include abdominal pain, lack of appetite and sensitivity to light.

If left untreated, more severe symptoms may develop, including:

- Shortness of breath
- Hypotension
- Confusion
- Seizures
- Anxiety, agitation, or nervousness
- Coma
- Numbness or weakness

The symptoms of RMSF are not to be taken lightly. If you notice any of those symptoms and have been in an area where RMSF is known to occur, reach out to a medical professional.

Some people are at a higher risk of becoming severely ill with RMSF, and that includes people who:

- are younger than 10 or older than 70 years
- have a compromised immune system
- have a glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency

Those who fit these traits should be on high alert for the first symptoms of RMSF since prompt treatment is crucial.

Treating Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Treatment of RMSF involves a course of antibiotics that generally lasts seven to 10 days. It is most effective when initiated within five days of symptom onset, which is why prompt medical attention is crucial if you develop the symptoms above and have traveled to a destination where RMSF is native.

If your treatment is delayed, RMSF can cause severe organ damage and cause life-threatening complications such as:

- acute kidney injury
- acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)
- pulmonary edema
- heart disease
- anemia, sepsis
- internal bleeding
- partial paralysis
- gangrene
- loss of bowel or bladder control
- brain inflammation
- organ failure

Without treatment, the fatality rate of RMSF can reach 20%-30%. The fatality rate is also higher if treatment begins five or more days after symptom onset.

Am I At Risk Of RMSF?

The good news is that unless you're traveling to the Americas, particularly the south-central and southeastern U.S., you're unlikely to be exposed to RMSF. However, if you do venture over to North, Central or South America, you may be at risk of RMSF, especially if you plan on spending time outside during the warmer ambient temperatures.

While you might not be at risk of RMSF if you stay in Switzerland, there are other tick-borne diseases transmitted in our geographical area, including tick-borne encephalitis (TBE). In fact, Switzerland is now one of the top countries at risk of TBE, which in severe cases can cause infection in or around the brain and spinal cord, which may result in death.

So be on your guard against tick bites both at home and abroad!

Protecting Yourself against Tick Bites

Whether you're traveling or staying home, when outside there is a risk for a tick bite that may transmit an infectious disease. To protect your health, it's best to avoid tick bites. Here are some tips on how to prevent tick bites:

- Wear long shirts and pants
- Wear socks and closed-toe shoes
- Tuck in your shirt into your pants and your pants into your socks
- Wear light-colored clothing to easily spot ticks
- Use insect repellent with ingredients that repel ticks (such as DEET)
- Avoid walking through tall grass, stay on cleared paths and pavement
- Shower after outdoor activities
- Check your pets for ticks if they've been outside

If you're traveling to North or South America, and especially states around the Rocky Mountains, following these tips can help prevent you from becoming infected by the deadliest tick-borne disease, but also from other infections such as Lyme disease.

Get Vaccinated Against Tick-Borne Diseases

While preventative measures are crucial for deterring tick bites, they may still occur. Being vaccinated against tick borne infections where possible reduces your risk for contracting a severe infection.

For those looking to protect themselves from TBE, a dangerous tick-borne disease that is common in many parts of Europe including Switzerland as well as Asia, book a “Just-a-Shot” appointment to quickly get protection from infections that “bite”.

References

Parola, P., Paddock, C. D., Socolovschi, C., Labruna, M. B., Mediannikov, O., Kernif, T., Abdad, M. Y., Stenos, J., Bitam, I., Fournier, P. E., & Raoult, D. (2013). Update on tick-borne rickettsioses around the world: a geographic approach. *Clinical microbiology reviews*, 26(4), 657–702. <https://doi.org/10.1128/CMR.00032-13>

Snowden J, Simonsen KA. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (*Rickettsia rickettsii*) [Updated 2023 Jul 17]. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2024 Jan-. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK430881/>

Regan, J. J., Traeger, M. S., Humpherys, D., Mahoney, D. L., Martinez, M., Emerson, G. L., Tack, D. M., Geissler, A., Yasmin, S., Lawson, R., Williams, V., Hamilton, C., Levy, C., Komatsu, K., Yost, D. A., & McQuiston, J. H. (2015). Risk factors for fatal outcome from rocky mountain spotted Fever in a highly endemic area-Arizona, 2002-2011. *Clinical infectious diseases : an official publication of the Infectious Diseases Society of America*, 60(11), 1659–1666. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/civ116>

Geographic Distribution. (2024). <https://www.cdc.gov/tick-borne-encephalitis/geographic-distribution/index.html>

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF). (2019). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/rmsf/index.html>

[https://www.msmanuals.com/de/profi/infektionskrankheiten/rickettsien-und-verwandte-erreger/rocky-mountain-fleckfieber#:~:text=\(Fleckfieber%2C%20Zeckenbissfieber%2C%20Zeckentyphus\)&text=Das%20Rocky%2DMountain%2DFleckfieber%20wird,starke%20Kopfschmerzen%20und%20ein%20Exanthem.&text=Das%20Rocky%2DMountain%2DFleckfieber%20ist%20eine%20Rickettsien%20Erkrankung.](https://www.msmanuals.com/de/profi/infektionskrankheiten/rickettsien-und-verwandte-erreger/rocky-mountain-fleckfieber#:~:text=(Fleckfieber%2C%20Zeckenbissfieber%2C%20Zeckentyphus)&text=Das%20Rocky%2DMountain%2DFleckfieber%20wird,starke%20Kopfschmerzen%20und%20ein%20Exanthem.&text=Das%20Rocky%2DMountain%2DFleckfieber%20ist%20eine%20Rickettsien%20Erkrankung.)

When Food and Water Become Dangerous: How to Avoid Parasites

When it comes to illnesses, one possible cause is parasites, or tiny organisms that feed from (or at the expense of) their host. Parasitic infections have been around for far longer than we have, and even Hippocrates—the ‘father of medicine’ who created the first version of the Hippocratic oath—described various diseases that may have been caused by parasites.



Parasitic infections are not going anywhere, but there are steps travelers can take to avoid them and keep their health up. First, let's look at the types of parasitic infections and the different ways that they can spread.

How Parasitic Infections Spread

When it comes to parasitic infections, there are three ways that they spread: through contaminated food or water, vector-borne transmission, or person-to-person contact.

Contaminated Food or Water

When traveling, it's always best to be cautious of the food and water you ingest, specifically ensuring that it has been prepared correctly (and ideally by yourself). Otherwise, you might be consuming more than just food or water.

There's a rule of thumb to follow when it comes to what you eat and drink: cook it, boil it, peel it, or leave it! By following these guidelines, you ensure you do all you can to avoid and remove contaminants such as parasites.

Just what might be lurking in ill-prepared food or nearby water? Some of the more common illnesses include

giardiasis, cyclosporiasis, or cryptosporidiosis. Giardia, in particular, is a common cause of traveler's diarrhea, and it most commonly gets people sick when they swallow contaminated drinking water or recreational water such as rivers, lakes, or pools.

Vector-Borne Transmission

These parasitic infections result from other animals through blood feeding. While this sounds like something out of a fantasy (or perhaps horror) novel, it simply refers to animals that bite, such as mosquitos or ticks.

One of the most common –and dangerous– vector-borne illnesses is malaria, which is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. Since these bugs are sneaky, it's always best to know if you are traveling somewhere where vector-borne transmission, such as malaria infection, is common so that you can take the proper precautions.

For mosquito or tick-borne illnesses, this includes wearing long clothing, sleeping with a mosquito net, and using bug spray during the day.

Person-To-Person Contact

This method of transmission occurs when an infected individual spreads an illness to another individual, usually through close contact. One such example of this is trichomoniasis, a sexually transmitted infection (STI). In cases such as this, the best method of prevention is using a condom while engaging in sexual intercourse, no matter which type of intercourse you are having. Not only will this prevent against parasitic STIs, but it will also protect against other types like gonorrhea and chlamydia.

Symptoms of Parasitic Infections

Unfortunately, symptoms of parasitic infections vary based on the organism causing the infection. Let's take a look at some of the most common:

Giardiasis: can cause gas, diarrhea, upset stomach, or dehydration.

Trichomoniasis: often produces no symptoms, but in some cases, it may cause redness, itching, and an unusual discharge in the genital area.

As you can see, each infection has different symptoms. However, for a general guide, some of the common symptoms of infection include:

- Muscle aches
- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue

Some parasitic infections may also cause a severe headache, itching, seizures, disorientation, rash, or sores.

If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms or anything concerning, it's best to visit a healthcare provider to determine the cause of your symptoms and begin treatment if necessary.

How to Avoid Parasites

It may seem overwhelming –all the ways that parasitic infections may spread– but there are steps that you can take to protect yourself and others.

Practice Good Hand Hygiene

When traveling, wash your hands often with soap and water, especially when you are more likely to spread germs, such as when eating or preparing food.

It's also important to remember that some parasites, such as Giardia, can be found in soil, so make sure to wash your hands after doing any fieldwork, even if you wear gloves.

Swim Responsibly

If you're going to a lake, pool, or any other place to swim, do not swallow the water. Additionally, it's good practice to shower before getting in the water to help wash away any germs that may be lingering on your skin.

Do not go swimming if you or a child are sick with diarrhea. Additionally, if you are with a young child, take them on frequent bathroom breaks or check their diapers every hour. When changing diapers, do so in a bathroom or diaper-changing areas, not by the water, to help keep poop and germs out of the water.

Avoid Contaminated Food and Water

When it comes to what you ingest, take extra care that it is safe to consume. Avoid untreated water, including ice made with water from rivers, lakes, springs, streams, ponds, or shallow wells. If you cannot guarantee that your drinking water is safe, opt for bottled water, use a filter certified for "cyst" and "oocyst" reduction, or boil your water for one minute first to make it safe to drink.

As for your food, you want to peel or wash any produce, but again, don't use water that might be contaminated. Also, avoid eating raw foods; if you're unsure if your food is fully cooked, pass on it.

Travel Advice regarding Sexual Health



Questions about sexual health while traveling?
You can talk to us openly and without complications about your sexual health and prevention while traveling!



https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/pre-travel_advice/travel_and_sex



Risk Factors of Parasitic Infections

Anyone can get a parasitic infection, but some individuals are at a greater risk. As such, if you fall into these categories, it's recommended to reach out to a travel medicine specialist to determine what you should do to best protect yourself. Those at a greater risk of parasitic infection include those who:

- Are traveling to a tropical or subtropical area.
- Have a compromised immune system.
- Swim in lakes, ponds, or rivers where *Giardia* or other parasites are common.
- Lack a clean supply of water for drinking.
- Work with soil.

Staying Proactive Against Parasites

Because of the many ways that parasites can spread, it is best to know what you might be susceptible to based on your travel location. For example, are you traveling somewhere where malaria or giardiasis are common? Knowing this before your trip ensures you take proper precautions to protect yourself from infection.

To best understand everything you might be at risk of, it's always recommended to book a travel consultation. During this meeting, a travel medicine specialist will provide information specific to you and your trip, keeping you safe while traveling and preventing any parasites from calling you their host.

References

- Cox F. E. (2002). History of human parasitology. *Clinical microbiology reviews*, 15(4), 595–612. <https://doi.org/10.1128/CMR.15.4.595-612.2002>
- NHS Choices. Prevention - Trichomoniasis. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/trichomoniasis/prevention/>
- CDC - Parasites - Travelers. <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/travelers.html>

Traveler's Diarrhea: What Is It and How Do You Prevent It?

When you're traveling, there's so much to take in—new sights, new people, new customs, new history—but the favorite for many people is the food! However, you need to be careful with food and drinks if you don't want to become closely acquainted with the bathroom.



Traveler's diarrhea is the most common complaint among travelers, and it can occur from just one brief lapse in mindfulness. There is no judgment here, because it can happen to all of us, but just one meal or beverage may be something you regret later on.

The golden rule when it comes to eating while traveling is: Cook it, boil it, peel it, or leave it! Continue reading to learn more about how this simple phrase can save your stomach.

What is Traveler's Diarrhea?

You're on your trip when you suddenly find yourself spending more time in the restroom than out exploring the area. Unfortunately, this condition, aptly named traveler's diarrhea, is all too common.

This digestive tract disorder causes loose stool and stomach cramps. It results from drinking water or eating food contaminated by bacteria, viruses or parasites.

Symptoms of Traveler's Diarrhea

While unpleasant, traveler's diarrhea isn't usually serious or a cause of major concern.

Some symptoms of traveler's diarrhea include:

- Urgently needing to pass stool
- Suddenly passing three or more loose stools a day
- Nausea
- Stomach cramps
- Fever
- Vomiting

While some travelers may develop these symptoms suddenly while on their trip, others may not experience them until shortly after they return home.

Thankfully, the amount of time you'll be sick is generally short, with most people feeling better after just 1 to 2 days and completely recovering in a week.

However, one of the biggest concerns with traveler's diarrhea is dehydration, with severe dehydration possible in some cases due to diarrhea or vomiting.

If you experience ongoing vomiting, bloody stools, a high fever, or severe abdominal pain, urgently visit a doctor. Additionally, if your diarrhea lasts longer than a few days, it's recommended that you see a healthcare professional. This is because, while most cases of traveler's diarrhea go away on their own, traveler's diarrhea caused by certain parasites, viruses or bacteria can cause a more severe infection that requires medication to get better.

Why Are Travelers More Susceptible to Diarrhea?

There are a couple of reasons why you need to worry more about stomach upset when traveling compared to when you're home.

First, when you're home, you prepare more food yourself, meaning you can ensure that proper sanitary practices are followed, and the food is cooked appropriately. When traveling, the location you travel to may follow different hygienic practices, leaving you susceptible to infection.

Additionally, our bodies develop immunity to our surroundings, so when you go somewhere new, you are susceptible to the pathogens native to that area, which otherwise do not harm the locals.

Both of these factors can make you more susceptible to stomach upset when traveling, but there are precautions you can take to minimize this risk.

Food And Beverage Precautions

If you're planning to travel in the future, it is helpful to know the precautions you should take to minimize the risk of traveler's diarrhea. Even one mistake can result in illness, so it's always better to be safe than sorry.

When in doubt, remember: Cook it, boil it, peel it, or leave it!

Say No to Ice

While your drinks may come from sealed containers, it is harder to know if the water used in your ice has been boiled and decontaminated. To be safe, it's best to opt for no ice. Your drink may not be as cold as you would like, but this is the best way to ensure that, as the ice melts, it doesn't release pathogens.

Use Sealed Bottled Water

As we just mentioned, you should aim for drinks from sealed containers, and especially water if you cannot guarantee that the drinking source is safe from bacteria, viruses or parasites. While using bottled water for drinking may seem like an obvious option, many people may not think of it when brushing their teeth. However, if you cannot guarantee that the tap water is safe, you will also want to use a sealed water bottle for this activity.

Keep Your Hands Clean

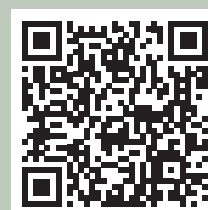
Hand hygiene is always important, but it is especially crucial when traveling and preparing or eating food. Be sure to use a mild soap to cleanse your hands regularly throughout the day, and especially after using the bathroom, before preparing food, or if you have come into contact with soil.

No Raw Food

When traveling, always check that your food isn't raw, especially any meat or fish. Cooking food helps to kill off any bacteria, viruses or parasites, so if you're ever unsure about if your food has been cooked enough, cook it for longer or pass, as it's not worth the risk of eating food that has not been properly cooked.

Pre-Travel Medical Consultation

Whether you're preparing to travel abroad with the family, have concerns about visiting a faraway region or are planning a trip around the world, your travel preparations are crucial. That's why our dedicated team delivers scientifically sound advice, vaccinations and information tailored to each country on your itinerary. So you can travel with peace of mind, knowing that you're protected from malaria, yellow fever and a host of other potential risks.



<https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/travel-health-consultation>

Cut It Yourself

Pre-cut fruit and salads can be highly convenient and a huge time-saver, but when you're traveling, you cannot always be sure of their safety. Even more, these are things that you wouldn't cook (thus killing any potential bacteria), so it's best to be more careful when consuming these foods. If you don't cut it yourself, opt for another snack.

Peel or Wash Your Produce

You'll want to prepare your fruit yourself, but it's essential to ensure it is properly cleaned. If the fruit has a peel, make sure to remove it completely before consuming the food. If it does not have a peel, use mineral water from a sealed container to rinse it.

Eat and Drink Smart While Traveling

When traveling, it's important to always be careful about what you're eating. You're in a new place that may contain bacteria, viruses and parasites your body is not immune to, and if you eat or drink them, they may get you sick, which can lead to traveler's diarrhea.

There are some travel locations where traveler's diarrhea is more common, in addition to specific groups at a greater risk of contracting this disease. To determine if these risks apply to you, it's recommended to schedule an appointment for a travel consultation, where a travel medicine specialist can look at your specific scenario to determine what you're at risk of and give advice for lowering your risk and keeping you healthy.

References

Dunn N, Okafor CN. Travelers Diarrhea. [Updated 2023 Jul 4]. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2023 Jan-. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK459348/>

Travelers' Diarrhea | Travelers' Health | CDC. Cdc.gov.
Published 2022. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/travelers-diarrhea>

IMPRESSUM

Public & Global Health Spotlight - 6th Issue - July 2025 - www.reisemedizin.uzh.ch

Editor: University of Zurich Travel Clinic

Responsible Editors: Jenny Crawford, Sofia Ricar

Authors: Travel Clinic UZH --- *Editorial:* Sofia Ricar --- *Print:* kdmz Kanton Zürich, Räfelfstrasse 32, 8090 Zürich
The magazine „Public & Global Health Spotlight“ can be downloaded free of charge on: www.reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/
Address: University of Zurich, Travel Clinic UZH, Hirschengraben 84, 8001 Zürich
Edition: 40 copies; is published several times a year. --- All rights reserved.

