

## Getting Sick Abroad: Uh Oh

Falling ill is the kind of trouble that can strike at anytime and at any place you happen to be. Getting sick is an unfortunate episode when traveling. It doesn't always happen so it's a mystery when it does occur. This article discusses normal stomach problems, such as food poisoning and diarrhea, not the more serious kind (for example, malaria, yellow fever, dengue, hepatitis, and so on).

In most cases, sickness abroad has to do with contaminated food. Maybe the chef at that quaint, out-of-the-way restaurant you checked out didn't wash his hands when he tossed your salad, or maybe the food just wasn't cooked properly.

The travel adage, 'boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it!' also applies in the Caribbean. Keep an eye out for those cold salads, ice cubes in drinks, and hand-made ice creams, raw food, and buffet warnings, because really, they aren't called 'warnings' just to look pretty.

Don't let this kind of thing worry you too much. Don't be excessively paranoid about food poisoning. It's probably not going to happen to you anyway, but it's best if you know how to protect yourself. Over-the-counter drugs will probably work well for you and as for dehydration, sports drinks are much easier to drink than water and will replace the electrolytes you have lost.

As for bottled water, they are commonly available in the whole region. If you've decided to spend most of your time on a Caribbean beach, you will most likely have no problems finding bottled water. However, if you want to go hiking or mountain trekking in remote areas, be sure to take iodine pills (not even chlorine) with you to put in your water. Chlorine just can't perform the way iodine can with those really nasty bugs.

Some of the most common illnesses you may get while on a vacation in the Caribbean include: diarrhea, dehydration, constipation, insect bites, skin irritations, colds, flu's, and sore throats.

Diarrhea is easy to handle with over-the-counter medicines. Alternatively, you could just wait it out and let whatever got into your digestive tract flush itself out. Be sure to drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and try eating apples sliced very thin and leaving them until they turn brown. The bacteria related to diarrhea and other symptoms normally expire after 36 hours. If the symptoms grow worse in your case, see a doctor.

Dehydration is the reason you feel so terrible during a bout of diarrhea. You can take salt sachets for dehydration to solve the problem and/or drink lots of liquids. If you need to eat, stick to dry biscuits, boiled potatoes and rice.

The frequency of constipation is rather unusual, considering how many travelers anticipate diarrhea instead. Again, drink plenty of water, eat fruit, and keep some natural laxatives at hand. Coffee and herbal tea may also help.

Colds, flu's, and sore throats are common after long rides on an airplane. They can also easily flare up in the Caribbean's damp climate. You might also develop skin irritations somewhere in your Caribbean vacation, either due to certain elements in the air, something you ate, or all those exotic plants surrounding you. But those skin irritations can be easily dealt with hydrocortisone cream or other travel sized remedies. If they get really painful, you can try anti-histamine pills.