*How to Maintain Healthy Digestion while Traveling!*

Ultimately, traveling should be a relaxing experience, an opportunity to change the mundane setting to something new and exciting, and a chance to enjoy yourself. Sadly, while we do enjoy ourselves, typically by trying new foods, drinking more than usual and relaxing on the beach, it often happens that vacation ends up being a challenge for your body, especially for your gut, with over half of vacationers experiencing some sort of digestive problem. The majority of travelers suffer from such issues as diarrhea, constipation, heartburn and bloating, and anything starting from the food you eat to air travel to your activity levels can affect your digestive health.

These annoyances can be extremely uncomfortable and can even ruin your vacation plans, but they don’t have to. You can prevent these common traveler’s gut issues by taking into account a few things and following the tips we suggest in this article.

**1. Watch Your Fiber Intake**

Fiber is essential for our digestive health in so many ways, so making sure you’re eating plenty of it is important every day. Sufficient fiber intake is especially crucial when you’re traveling, as up to 48% of vacationers were reported to experience traveler’s constipation, and fiber helps to keep things moving even when you’re stressed and not very active.

To make sure you’re getting enough fiber, you can make a rule for yourself to eat plenty of fruit and veggies while you’re traveling, or include  more whole grains into your diet, even if you mainly eat out. Packing an apple and a whole grain energy bar into your bag as a healthy snack is also a great way to increase your fiber intake.

**2. Water and Herbal Teas are Your Friends**

Becoming dehydrated while traveling is alarmingly easy, as we tend to forget about our water intake when we’re on the beach or exploring a new and exciting place, and it might be a hassle to drink enough on a plane or while driving. Those are exactly the pitfalls that can cause constipation and worsen your diarrhea symptoms, and so we recommend to drink enough water and then some more to prevent those issues.

And while replacing your water with cool soft drinks, coffee or cocktails may sound tempting, don’t submit to that temptation, as all of these drinks can actually trigger digestive issues ranging from heartburn to diarrhea. Finally, it might also be a smart decision to stock up on some peppermint tea if you’re prone to constipation, bloating and gas, as it may help relieve the bloating and calm your gut.

**3. Avoid Trigger Foods**

Even if you know 100% that the food you eat while on your vacation is safe and properly cooked, you’re not clear of digestive issues. This is because we tend to sleep less, eat more and change our meal schedule while on vacation, all of which makes our gut more sensitive to the types of foods we eat.

And we all know what kind of food we indulge in on vacation: everything that’s too sweet, too salty, veg-free, and preferably fried. And while trying new local foods and cooking the least amount of food possible is certainly part of any adventure, we recommend you to be mindful of the type of foods you choose to eat.

Oily, greasy and overly-processed foods can cause constipation, and sugary foods and drinks, as well as dairy,  can trigger diarrhea. Eating portions that are too big, too fast, or overindulging in coffee and acidic foods can cause acid reflux, whereas consuming a lot of beans, broccoli, and cabbage can make you bloated.

There are also some trigger foods that worsen your symptoms specifically, so if you know, for example, that milk chocolate often makes you constipated, steer clear of it even on your vacation.

**4. Don’t Ignore Your Gut**

If you’re used to a certain meal schedule, try to keep it up while you’re traveling as much as you can. This will make sure you have plenty of energy and keep your digestive flow steady.

Another common mistake people are guilty of is ignoring the urge to go to the bathroom, which can lead to constipation. Even if you don’t feel particularly comfortable using a public bathroom or the one at your hotel, it’s important to listen to your body, otherwise, you are risking turning your entire vacation into an extensive and often painful bathroom break.

**5. Stay Active**

Now, it makes sense to give your exercise routine a break when you’re traveling, but you still have to stay active when you’re on vacation, otherwise, your digestive system may become more sluggish and slow, which can bring about a variety of digestive symptoms.

Doctors point out that medium intensity exercise can improve digestion and prevent constipation (obviously, not only when you’re on vacation). Even if you’re relaxing on the beach 24/7, try to take regular walks (or swims) each day to keep your body, and especially your gut, active and happy.

**6. Wash Your Hands (Often)**

Washing your hands with soap as often as you can is a great way to prevent food poisoning, as, despite popular belief, we catch a lot of bad gut bacteria and viruses from our own hands and not infected food per se. Pools, bathroom stalls, doorknobs, planes, and buses are all a breeding ground for harmful bacteria, with often thousands of people passing by these places each day.

Even if you can’t wash your hands before and after every meal, make sure to carry around wet wipes, napkins and a hand sanitizer on you at all times and use them constantly. When washing your hands, make sure to use soap and avoid closing the tap or touch any doorknobs directly with your hands in a bathroom after washing your hands (use a towel or napkin instead), as bathrooms are notorious for spreading all kinds of harmful microorganisms.

**7. Do Your Research**

Before traveling to a certain country, research food safety in that destination, as in many countries, restaurant and street food, as well as tap water may not be as safe as in your home country. If any of the above-mentioned are an issue, always avoid street food and choose restaurants carefully.

If water is an issue, also avoid ice cubes in your drinks. Some doctors even recommend sticking to bottled water no matter where you’re planning to go, as the composition of the local tap water may differ from what your body is used to, which can upset your stomach.

It’s also safer to stick to cooked rather than raw foods, as well as to choose pasteurized products to make sure your food is free from harmful bacteria. We have written an article about 10 foods that typically cause food poisoning you can check out. Also, you can access CDC’s food recommendations for travelers here, which we also find quite helpful.

**8. Stock Up on These (Just in Case)**

As you may have noticed, all the tips we mentioned previously were ways to prevent an upset stomach and gut, which is, of course, optimal, but what can you do if there you are, in the tourist destination of your dreams, suffering from a digestive issue? For that purpose, you should have a well-stocked first-aid kit that will get you back on your feet in no time.

The same works for people who know that they always suffer from a certain issue while traveling, and this way they will be well-stocked ahead of time.. Here are some OTC meds you might want to pick up:

**1. If you suffer from persistent traveler’s constipation,** you will benefit from psyllium husks or bulk-forming laxatives, which, unlike other laxatives, don’t cause dependency and are not likely to have complications. Do keep in mind that you will need to drink a lot of water if you’re taking these, or else they can worsen your symptoms.

**2. If heartburn is your main concern,** you can take antacids, which will improve the symptoms, but keep in mind that you shouldn’t take them for more than a week.

**3. If you experience mild traveler’s diarrhea**, you can stock up on Pepto-Bismol or loperamide (Imodium).

Do keep in mind, however, that persistent or severe symptoms will require professional medical attention, especially if they are accompanied by a fever, cramps, blood in the stool, etc. Need more medical advice for travelers?