



Going to Mexico or Central America?

Some Tips to Keep You Healthy & Safe

Recommended Vaccinations

- ❑ Hepatitis A - all travelers
- ❑ Typhoid – travelers with adventuresome dietary habits
- ❑ Hepatitis B – health care workers; possible new sexual contact during stay
- ❑ Rabies – all adventure travelers, hikers, cave explorers and backpackers
- ❑ Influenza – why spoil your trip with the flu?
- ❑ Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis – if it has been 5 years since last booster

Malaria

Risk exists throughout the year in rural areas, including resorts in rural areas of some states. For travel restricted to major resort areas in urban or well-developed areas on the Pacific and Gulf coasts (Acapulco, Ixtapa, Mazatlan, Cancun, Cozumel, Merida), travelers should use good insect precautions*. Risk becomes significantly higher immediately upon leaving the proximity of these resort areas and medication to prevent malaria is recommended for overnight hikers or campers. The medicine Chloroquine protects against malaria in this area.

Traveler's Diarrhea

- ❑ **High risk throughout these countries including deluxe accommodations in major cities**
- ❑ Consider treatment with loperamide (Imodium AD) and/or a quinolone antibiotic (Cipro or Levaquin)

Other health concerns:

- ❑ Dengue fever (flu-like viral illness, transmitted by mosquitoes, occurs in urban and rural areas. Daytime insect precautions are recommended.
- ❑ Leishmaniasis (boil-like skin disease) transmitted by sandflies is widespread in rural areas, insect precautions recommended
- ❑ West Nile Virus, transmitted by mosquitoes, is found throughout most of Mexico in animals, human cases have been reported in northern states of Chihuahua and Sonora along the US border. Minimal risk to travelers, evening and nighttime insect precautions recommended.
- ❑ Brucellosis is common. Avoid unpasteurized goat cheese (always white in color) and other unpasteurized dairy products.
- ❑ Locally manufactured medications are of inconsistent quality. Always purchase name brands from international manufacturers.

Security – Violent crime in Mexico City, Tijuana, Nuevo Laredo and Ciudad Juarez is common. Avoid travel outside of well-frequented tourist areas. Avoid taking any taxi not summoned by telephone or contacted in advance at the airport. Use extraordinary vigilance and strictly adhere to personal security strategies at all times.

***Insect precautions:**



- ❑ Remain in well-screened areas from dusk to dawn
- ❑ Wear light clothing that covers exposed skin
- ❑ Use insect repellent that contains DEET (30-35% concentration = 4 hours protection) the higher the concentration the longer the period of protection OR Picaridin 20% concentration (e.g., Cutter Advantage).
- ❑ Use permethrin spray (e.g., Permanone) on clothing and bednets to add another layer of protection. One application lasts 4-8 weeks including through laundering.

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Traveler's diarrhea – common among travelers and is acquired through eating and drinking contaminated food and/or water. Most people have symptoms for 3-4 days. Use Imodium AD (OTC form) to slow down diarrhea symptoms. Increase your fluid intake as well as salt and sugar intake. To avoid dehydration, drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids (water or sport's drinks). An antibiotic may be taken to treat severe diarrhea if you get symptoms. If you are taking oral contraceptives, remember to use a back-up contraceptive while you are taking any antibiotics. If bloody diarrhea or high fever develops, do not treat yourself, but seek medical attention immediately.

Food and water precautions - Infections that travelers can acquire from food and drink are those causing severe diarrhea and hepatitis A. Only the following might be safe to drink:

1. Beverages such as tea or coffee made from boiled water;
2. Canned or bottled carbonated beverages, including bottled water and soft drinks
3. Beer and wine (in tropical climates, to avoid dehydration, alternate one non-alcoholic drink for every alcoholic drink consumed)

Remember that ice should be considered contaminated and should not be used in beverages. If ice has been in contact with beverages in containers i.e., coolers, the container should be cleaned with soap and water before opening. It is safer to drink from a bottle or can than from a questionable container. Water on outside of cans or bottles may also be contaminated. **DON'T BRUSH TEETH WITH TAP WATER – KEEP MOUTH CLOSED WHEN SHOWERING!**

All raw food is subject to contamination. Avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, unpasteurized milk and milk products and eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot, or fruit that has been peeled by YOU. Undercooked or raw meat, fish and shellfish may carry various intestinal pathogens. Consumption of food and beverages obtained from street vendors has been associated with a high prevalence of illness and should be avoided.

Most viral, bacterial, and parasitic infections appear within six weeks of travel. Be sure to tell your physician you visited Mexico if you become ill after your trip!

**DON'T RISK SPOILING YOUR VACATION BY AN UNWANTED ILLNESS OR INJURY
– USE CARE WHEN TRAVELING ANYWHERE OUT OF THE USA!**