

Special report:

Taming Moctezuma before he puts you on the run!

*A guide to preventing
Travelers Diarrhea*

By James A. Truett

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He just completed a new book, "**50 Things You Must Know Before You Travel to Mexico**" available through TrueStar Publishing:

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Moctezuma's Revenge, euphemistically called "Travelers Diarrhea" in text books and puritan discussions, is the secret scourge of as many as 20 million foreign travelers each year who fear drinking tainted water or eating anything mildly exotic could turn their overseas vacation into never-ending runs to the toilet.

Travelers Diarrhea really is quite common for anyone traveling out of their home territory – not just those visiting Third World countries -- as everyone naturally manages to pick up local bugs and bacteria by virtue of being in a new environment. Diarrhea is one of the ways your body responds as the newly uninvited guests invade your digestive turf.

While most people relate the brief but often debilitating illness to drinking water in Third World countries, Travelers Diarrhea is common also for foreign visitors to the U.S. and First World countries, and water isn't the only culprit. Again, it's a matter of different bugs getting into your system.

For travelers to Mexico, Travelers Diarrhea has long been called "Moctezuma's Revenge," a name that came about after the Aztec Emperor Moctezuma vowed to

avenge the invasion of his empire by forces led by Hernan Cortes in the early 1500s.

These days, just about any ailment that befalls a visitor to Mexico seems to be dubbed Moctezuma's Revenge, though more often than not the illness is self-inflicted by unbridled partying, rampant physical abuse and overindulgence during a wild vacation.

While similar symptoms can arise from drinking too much alcohol, heat exhaustion, eating spicy foods, eating foods high in fat, jet lag and the general stress of traveling, the real Travelers Diarrhea is caused by strains of bacteria present in food and water just about everywhere.

Most cases of TD develop within the traveler's first week on foreign soil – the third day seems to be the most popular time for the microscopic army to mount its attack, though TD can develop at any time.

The bacteria enter your body through eating, drinking, bathing and even breathing. Because your body is not used to the foreign strains, it reacts by trying to expel the invading bacteria – and that results in diarrhea, fever, nausea and vomiting, stomach cramps and general weakness.

The condition generally runs its course in a matter of days as your body rebalances itself in relation to the new environment. If you're spending a long time in the foreign country, your body will adapt to the local bacteria in a matter of weeks. Don't be surprised if you experience the problem in reverse upon returning to your home country.

One couple's solution to prevent any bouts with TD while traveling with their small children in Mexico was to sentence the family to eating only peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and drinking carbonated soft drinks! As it turns out, the parents were researchers for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. They chose this austere regimen because they didn't want the kids to "pickup any of the local flora and fauna."

That's not a practical solution for most travelers as the local cuisine is an important part of the foreign experience. Is there a way to enjoy the gastronomical delights of a foreign country and still protect against getting TD?

The answer is a resounding "Yes!". Several approaches offer varying degrees of risk. Here are some suggestions and methods that have worked for others.

Pack a “Travelers Medical Kit” with the following items:

- ∞ Pepto Bismol or Imodium AD in liquid or tablet form.
- ∞ A pack of Lomotil (a small pill that slows the digestive system when things are moving a little too quickly!)
- ∞ One of the following antibiotics (get prescription, dosage and length of use from your doctor):
 - Bactrim
 - Floxin
 - Rifaximin
- ∞ Acidophilus pills (from health food store)
- ∞ Benadryl (for unexpected allergic reactions)

Consult with your physician regarding dosages, timing and length of use of the items in your medical kit.

The following recommendations are based on results from others in real life situations, but they do not take

into account other medications you may already be taking and your personal medical history.

In other words, this information is not intended as medical. Again, please be sure to check with your doctor for specific instructions relative to your individual situation.

In all scenarios, at least three days before your trip, you should:

- ∞ Eat meals high in fiber (a good idea regardless of travel plans)
- ∞ Eat lots of yogurt to help make sure your stomach has lots of good bacteria to aid the digestion process.
- ∞ Take a couple of acidophilus capsules each day.
- ∞ If you're not pooping regularly, and the turds are not floating in the toilet bowl, drink some large glasses of juice with Metamucil or other colon cleansing ingredient mixed in. *(Best to do a couple of days before travel).*

The object of this pre-travel exercise is get your digestive system in top condition so it's ready for the impending potential onslaught of foreign (TD causing) bacteria.

Once you arrive at your destination, try to ease into your vacation lifestyle so your body can get over travel stresses and adjust to the new surroundings.

Low Risk: For the minimum risk of contracting TD (*other than eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches*):

- ∞ Drink only carbonated water or soft drinks or purified water from sealed bottles that you open yourself. It's not uncommon for some small restaurants and some hotels to bottle their own water for you, but this adds the risk of contaminating the water. Make sure any ice cubes are made from purified water as well.
- ∞ Brush your teeth, wash your face and change your contacts with purified water.
- ∞ Drink beer and wine in moderation – remember that the effects of alcohol are magnified by physical activity and the amount of time you spend in the sun.

- ∞ Don't eat green salads unless you know the lettuce and other ingredients have been washed in an antibacterial solution. First class and hotel restaurants are more likely to practice better sanitation than smaller inner-city restaurants.

- ∞ Don't eat raw vegetables or thin-skinned fruits unless you know they have been washed in an antibacterial solution. (*Fruits that you peel, such as oranges and bananas, generally are okay – just don't eat the skins!*)

- ∞ Don't eat out at street side stands or small sidewalk restaurants.

- ∞ Make sure everything you eat has been well cooked. Avoid rare meat or uncooked fish or shellfish.

- ∞ Avoid alcohol to excess (*try telling a Spring Breaker that one*).

- ∞ Avoid super hot spicy meals. The active ingredient that makes chiles hot to taste also is known to upset the digestive system if you ingest too much of it. Do a little taste test before piling on the salsas.

Medium Risk: If you've been taking the Acidophilus capsules and eating lots of yogurt as recommended before your trip, you can fudge a little and eat a little more liberally.

- ∞ Start your day with a small dose of Pepto Bismol or Imodium AD, or take a small dose before each meal, as a preventative measure.
- ∞ Continue to drink only bottled water or soft drinks, beer or wine.
- ∞ Go ahead and eat an occasional salad from a clean restaurant.
- ∞ Eat fruits and vegetables that have been washed.
- ∞ Stay away from street side stands.
- ∞ Go ahead and try some of the spicier meals.

If you're at least a few days into your trip, and the bugs are being respectful guests in your tummy, you might want to try some of the local treats that most visitors avoid (*but they haven't been taking care of themselves like you, right?*).

High Risk: You can try this as long as you've followed the regimen, and you're okay several days into your trip:

- ∞ Keep on with the bottled water, soft drink, beer & wine routine.
- ∞ Enjoy the salads fruits and vegetables, but do pay attention to cleanliness as you would in your own home.
- ∞ Try some of the street side taco or seafood stands. They have some of the greatest food around, but use some good judgment. If it's 100 degrees, and you're at a seafood stand that has no refrigeration, you might want to avoid that.
- ∞ On the other hand, a taco stand that is grilling meat or deep frying fish tacos could be okay. Watch the condiments. Are the salsas in covered containers? Does the area look sanitary? Go ahead, give it a try.

At the earliest sign of a stomach problem, take a dose of Lomotil and start regular doses of Imodium or Pepto Bismol, or follow your doctor's advice for your particular case.

If you develop a case of TD (you'll know because you'll be running to the toilet), start taking the antibiotics immediately and continue taking the Pepto Bismol or Imodium AD and Lomotil as needed. You should start feeling better in a matter of 8 to 12 hours, but you must continue taking the antibiotics for the full course as prescribed by your doctor to fully kick the bugs in their butts and out of yours.

With bacterial strains developing resistance to antibiotics, it's a good idea not to take the antibiotics unless it's absolutely necessary. Added to that, you'll also have to curtail your party program – as in stop drinking – in order for the antibiotics to be effective.

One promising new method for avoiding TD is to take prophylactic doses of the Rifaximin starting just before leaving on your trip. While it has not been officially approved for preventative use, studies have shown that Rifaximin can significantly reduce the risk of contracting TD. This particular antibiotic is not absorbed into the bloodstream so it is ideal for intestinal use.

A study done in 2005 by the University of Arizona tested the effectiveness of Rifaximin in preventing TD in students enrolled in its summer language program in

Guadalajara, Mexico. Results were that 54 percent of the subjects given a placebo (not the medication) developed TD, but only 15 percent of those receiving the Rifaximin got sick.

Rifaximin has not been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use as a preventative to TD – only as a treatment.

Other medicines are under development for preventing TD now. Check with your doctor before your travels, as very soon he may have a magic pill that will put Moctezuma's Revenge to rest after keeping travelers on the "run" for 500 years.

Considering a trip to Mexico? Planning to retire and live there?

Don't believe everything the travel guides tell you! "50 Things You Must Know Before You Travel to Mexico" contains real life information that could make the difference between a pleasant stay or a nightmare.

“The book is filled with vital information so even someone who has lived in Mexico for years can learn from it,” says Bruce Berger, an award-winning writer who has lived in Baja part-time for the past 30 years. “For the newcomer, reading this book is a necessary act.”

The 102-page e-book is packed with practical information about saving money and dealing with other financial issues, communications options, personal safety and protection issues, legal issues and cultural issues, all based on writer James Truett’s 10+ years of living south of the border.

You won’t find this information in travel guides or in tourist brochures, and you’ll find it handy whether you’re just vacationing in Mexico or plan to retire and live there full time.

Check it out at:

<http://hop.clickbank.net/?bajainside/truostar>

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