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## Understand How Infectious Diseases Spread

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Knowing how infectious diseases spread will help protect you from getting sick while traveling and decrease the likelihood that you will spread illness to other travelers. The following information will empower you to be a more responsible traveler — so that you can protect your health and the health of others. Two main types of illnesses that you may be able to spread easily to another person are respiratory illnesses (those that affect your breathing) and foodborne illnesses (those spread by eating, drinking, or putting something in your mouth that has been contaminated).

### Respiratory Illnesses

Illnesses like the flu spread from person to person when droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air and get into the mouth or nose of people nearby. The germs in these droplets can often also live on surfaces, such as desks or doorknobs, for 2 hours or longer and can spread when people touch these surfaces and then touch their eyes, mouth, and nose. You can learn more about spreading germs by reading the information in [“Stopping Germs at Home, Work, and School \(http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home\\_work\\_school.htm\).”](http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home_work_school.htm)

### Stop Your Respiratory Illness from Spreading to Others

If you decide to travel while you have a respiratory illness, don't spread your germs to others!

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw away used tissues. (Place them in a trash can or the sick bag when on a flight.)
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Wash after you use the bathroom, sneeze or cough, and before eating or touching anything that you might put in your mouth. (Hand sanitizer with alcohol may be used if no running water is available.)
- Do not share food or drink with others.

### Foodborne Illnesses

You will encounter many different foods and food preparations when visiting other countries. Unfortunately, these new foods may also come with a virus, bacteria, or parasite. As a result, foodborne illnesses are common among travelers.

Furthermore, hygiene and safety practices for food and water may be different in other countries than what you are used to at home. You can get a foodborne illness from eating or drinking contaminated food and water.

### Avoid Becoming Infected with a Foodborne Illness

- Eat foods that are fully cooked and served hot.
- Eat only fruits and vegetables that you can wash and peel yourself.



- Do not eat food from street vendors.
- Drink beverages that have been bottled or sealed (water, carbonated drinks, or sports drinks).
- Do not put ice in drinks.
- See country-specific tips for your [destination](#).

Another way that foodborne illnesses can spread is through contact with human feces (stool). This type of contact is often accidental and can occur, for example, when an infected person does not properly wash hands after using the bathroom and then touches food that others will eat. Learn more about foodborne illness by visiting the Travelers' Health [Safe Food and Water](#) page.

### Stop Your Foodborne Illness from Spreading to Others

- Do not prepare or serve food for others while you have symptoms and for 24 hours after your symptoms are gone.
- On cruise ships or other organized tours, follow warnings about staying away from other passengers. This could mean being isolated away from others for a period of time.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before eating or preparing food.
- Sometimes when you are sick with a foodborne illness, you may not be able to get to a bathroom quickly. If this happens and clothes or other linens are soiled, remove and wash, with hot water and soap, as soon as possible. If you are unable to wash clothing, rinse it as well as possible and place it into a sealed plastic bag.
- Flush any vomit or other waste in a toilet. Put materials that you cannot flush, such as paper towels, into a trash bag. Tie the trash bag closed and throw it away. Keep the surrounding area clean.
- Learn more on CDC's [Foodborne Illness \(http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/foodborneinfections\\_g.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/foodborneinfections_g.htm) webpage.

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National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID) (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/index.html>)

Division of Global Migration and Quarantine (DGMQ) (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dgmq/index.html>)