



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, some form of diarrhea hits nearly half of all seniors who venture far away from home. Some call it Montezuma's revenge, but when it happens to you, there's nothing funny about it.

There are three basic kinds of diarrhea: viral, bacterial and, especially for traveling seniors, sudden changes in eating habits. The kind that hits most often is bacterial, and named for the ancient Mexican emperor because it comes from unclean foods, sometimes from the land south of our border.

Mexico is accused, often unfairly, of having poor sanitation standards. However, on any travel away from home, seniors should do their eating at higher-scale, clean restaurants. Further, never eat food directly from street vendors nor drink any water other than bottled and/or boiled. The rule applies to all water use. When brushing teeth, and always wash your hands thoroughly before and after eating anywhere.

Viral diarrhea hits from close contact with others who've been afflicted, the same way colds and flu spread. Senior travelers can't avoid being jammed into crowds in airplanes, trains, buses, hotel elevators, restaurants and entertainment events. The only way to avoid being exposed to this kind of affliction is to stay home and hide under your bed.

Seriously, when a tourist, try to avoid the worst crowding scenes. Little out-of-the-way cafés, small clubs, and taxis instead of buses. If you don't mind putting out the bucks, get bumped up from sardine-can aircraft seating to business or first class.

Another diarrhea is what we get from sudden changes in eating habits. For instance, a senior who usually avoids high-calorie foods hits the famed Las Vegas all-you-can-eat buffets. Or on a

luxury cruise and can order anything in the ship's dining room three times a day, plus the midnight chocoholic buffet.

Too many seniors forget that their innards are not as forgiving as they were in their early years. It may take some heroic restraint, and the heavy, fatty, sugary, spicy food looks very inviting. The senior who doesn't want innards to burst out every hour on the hour must eat sensibly.

There are medications to help prevent diarrhea, and a swig of Pepto Bismol or similar potion every couple of hours can help ease the quease. Check with your family doctor for taking some prescription medications that can help stop the symptoms. Don't overeat, especially strange foods you've never tried before, and drink lots of purified water, boiled tea and coffee.