



Q: I'm a 68-year-old retired surgery nurse, and should be able to handle all situations. I read recently about a brand-new new cruise ship where many of the passengers got food poisoning and severe seasickness on the first voyage. Friends frequently invite me to join them on a cruise, but I always refuse.

After a career in hospital work, I'm still obsessed with cleanliness. Now that I'm retired, I've been asked to take a cruise with family. How can I do it without being a pain-in-the-butt clean freak? *RLB, Scranton PA*

A: If you travel by land, you'd probably have reasons to be critical of a dingy little hotel in Paris or grungy bed & breakfast in Budapest. However, major cruise ship lines are as obsessive about cleanliness as you are. Once aboard, you'll see crew constantly scrubbing and swabbing throughout the ship.

Ease the constant need for hospital-like cleanliness. If you feel you can't quite let yourself go, talk with friends who've recently cruised . Maybe a session with your family physician can help overcome those fears.

Before cruising, cut back gradually on your most obsessive actions. Instead of fussing every day, clean the house and do laundry once or twice a month. Just will yourself to relax, sit back and enjoy your retirement years, both on land and sea.