

BACK YOUR LOCAL PHARMACY

Tummy bugs

Off on your holidays? Ask your pharmacist for advice on how to avoid travellers' diarrhoea...

There are several essentials to remember before leaving for your holiday – for instance, travel insurance, passports, tickets and travellers' cheques. But another pre-holiday essential is a visit to your local pharmacy, as this could mean the difference between a trip to remember and a health nightmare to forget. Your pharmacist can offer all sorts of advice on holiday health, including how to avoid the curse of holiday-makers everywhere: travellers' tummy.

Here are some questions you can expect your pharmacist to answer...

What causes diarrhoea when you're on holiday?

Usually, tummy bugs are caused by bacteria, viruses and infections from contaminated food and drink. The first week of your holiday is when you're most likely to get diarrhoea, but it can strike at any time, even after you've returned home. And, while it's rarely a serious condition, it can give you a few days of sheer misery (or longer, if you're really unlucky).

Which countries have the highest risk of diarrhoea?

If you travel to a developing country, you stand a 50/50 chance of getting diarrhoea. The most high-risk destinations include

Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Medium-risk destinations include most of Southern Europe and some Caribbean islands, while Northern Europe, Canada, America, Australia and New Zealand are all low-risk areas.

What exactly causes most cases of travellers' tummy?

The bacterium known as E.coli causes between 20 and 50 per cent of travellers' tummy. This is an enterotoxigenic organism – meaning it's toxic to the intestines – found in water, milk and soil. If you get diarrhoea from E.coli, you may also have other symptoms, such as vomiting, fever, cramps and nausea. Other bacteria that cause diarrhoea include salmonella and campylobacter.

Parasites such as giardia and entamoeba histolytica – found in contaminated water – are less common, causing around only two per cent of diarrhoea cases in travellers. But, they tend to be nastier than E.coli and may cause symptoms that last for weeks. Intestinal viruses, such as rotavirus, can also be to blame.

How can I reduce the risk of getting diarrhoea?

While you're away, follow these common-sense guidelines to reduce your risk of getting travellers' tummy:

- Drink carbonated bottled water, as the carbonation helps to kill bacteria. Brush your teeth with it too.
- Avoid still water – even if it's bottled – and no matter how hot it gets, don't add ice to your drinks.
- If you can't get fizzy bottled water, boil any water you can get hold of for a good minute to make sure no bugs can survive. Alternatively, you can use water-purifying tablets – available from your local pharmacy.

- Don't just be careful about drinking water – also make sure you avoid swimming or playing in contaminated water.
- Where food is concerned, make sure that any hot food you eat has been heated through properly, and never buy from street-side food stalls.
- Peel any fresh fruits and vegetables yourself, and don't wash them in water unless you're going to boil them afterwards.
- Avoid under-cooked meat and fish products, and stay away from dairy products too.

Can I take any precautions before I travel?

If you're travelling to a high-risk area, your doctor can prescribe antibiotics to take once you've arrived. But, although these may protect you against bacteria, they're not effective against either parasites or viruses.

What should I do if I get diarrhoea?

Drink plenty of water to make sure you don't get dehydrated. This is particularly important for children and elderly people. Use a fluid-replacement remedy such as Dioralyte or Rehidrat (make sure you buy some from your pharmacy before you leave the country), and follow the instructions carefully.

You can also take medicines that give quick but temporary relief, like remedies containing loperamide – such as UniChem Loperamide, Imodium, Arret and Diocalm. However, these should only be given to adults and children over the age of 12.

Other remedies include kaolin, such as Kaopectate. But, despite the fact that these are milder than the loperamide-based remedies, most of them are still not suitable for children under five. So, before you jet off, always ask your pharmacist for a suitable remedy for yourself, and another for your children.

8 Essential holiday products to pack

SCHOLL FLIGHT SOCKS

- Help reduce the risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis.
- Discreet, comfortable, and suitable for both men and women of all ages.

RRP: £11.95



KODAK ULTRA COMPACT SINGLE-USE CAMERA

- Look and feel of a reloadable camera.
- Best flash – one-touch switch and increased range.
- Best lens – has the sharpest lens in any single-use camera.
- Pictures as clear as those taken with a reloadable 35mm camera.

RRP: £8.99 (Flash); £5.99 (Daylight)



LANACANE MEDICATED POWDER/LANACANE MEDICATED CREAM

- Powder: unique medicated powder, which protects against skin irritation.
- Cream: soothes skin irritation, helps promote natural healing
- Contains fast-acting anaesthetic.

RRP: Powder: £5.99 (175g); £3.99 (100g). Cream: £5.79 (60g); £3.59 (30g)



VAGISIL FEMININE POWDER/VAGISIL FEMININE WASH

- Powder: ends feminine moisture and odour problems.
- 100% talc-free for maximum absorption.
- Exclusive moisture shield.
- Wash: 100% soap-free formula.
- Won't irritate delicate skin.
- PH balanced.

RRP: Powder: £4.69 (100g); Wash: £4.99 (175ml)

KODAK GOLD 200

- Great value for money.
- Sunny or cloudy, Kodak Gold 200 always gives great results.
- 24 exposures.

Special price: £2.99 (RRP: £4.29)



EARCALM SPRAY

- The only treatment for mild ear infection that you can buy over the counter.
- Specifically designed to be easy to use.
- Does not contain antibiotics (contains acetic acid).
- Can be used by children over the age of 12.

EarCalm is a registered trademark of the Glaxo SmithKline Group of companies.

RRP: £6.38 (5ml spray)



CALIFIG

- The original natural, fruit-based laxative.
- Easy to take in a pleasant-tasting syrup of figs.

RRP: £3.99 (110ml); £2.45 (55ml)



ZANAX-CLICK

- Relieves mosquito bites through a tiny electric charge.
- Works by breaking down histamine build-up.
- Easy to use – and painless!
- No battery required.
- Lasts for at least 4,000 bites.

RRP: £5.99



ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

Questions to ask your pharmacist...

Are diarrhoea drugs suitable for anyone? Some remedies aren't suitable for the elderly or under-12s. They also shouldn't be taken if you have certain bowel conditions. If you are pregnant or breast-feeding, don't take any medicines without getting medical advice first.

Are there side effects to look out for? Don't exceed the recommended dose, as this can lead to constipation. The drug loperamide can trigger abdominal cramps,

dizziness, drowsiness and skin reactions, while codeine phosphate can cause nausea, vomiting and drowsiness. With prolonged use, remedies that include morphine can sometimes lead to dependence.

Can anti-diarrhoea remedies react with any other medicines?

Kaolin can reduce the effectiveness of some medicines – including heart drugs – while codeine can interact with a host of other drugs. Always ask your pharmacist.

The companies and brands above are proud to support your local pharmacies

10 steps to a healthy heart

British Heart Week (June 10-18) has come round again. Here's how you can help **keep your ticker ticking over nicely...**

Nearly one in four people in the UK suffers from hypertension (high blood pressure), but around a third don't even realise they are suffering from it. In fact, many don't find out until it's too late – after they've had a stroke or a heart attack.

If you do suffer from hypertension, you can reduce or help control it by incorporating these 10 easy steps into your lifestyle. Even if you don't have it, this 10-step plan can help you keep your blood pressure normal.

1 **Weighty issues**

A healthy diet shouldn't be a temporary measure, but a regular part of your life. Over half the adult population of Britain is overweight or obese, meaning they have a greater risk of high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, not to mention diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Even a 10-pound weight loss can have a significant effect on your blood pressure. For more advice on diet, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

2 **Exercise more**

It's well known that exercise helps protect against heart disease, but over 75 per cent of adults aren't active enough. Try activities that are easy for you to maintain, such as swimming, cycling or walking, and try to do 30 minutes of exercise five days a week to help strengthen your heart. Always check with your doctor before embarking on a new exercise regime.

3 **Cut out fat**

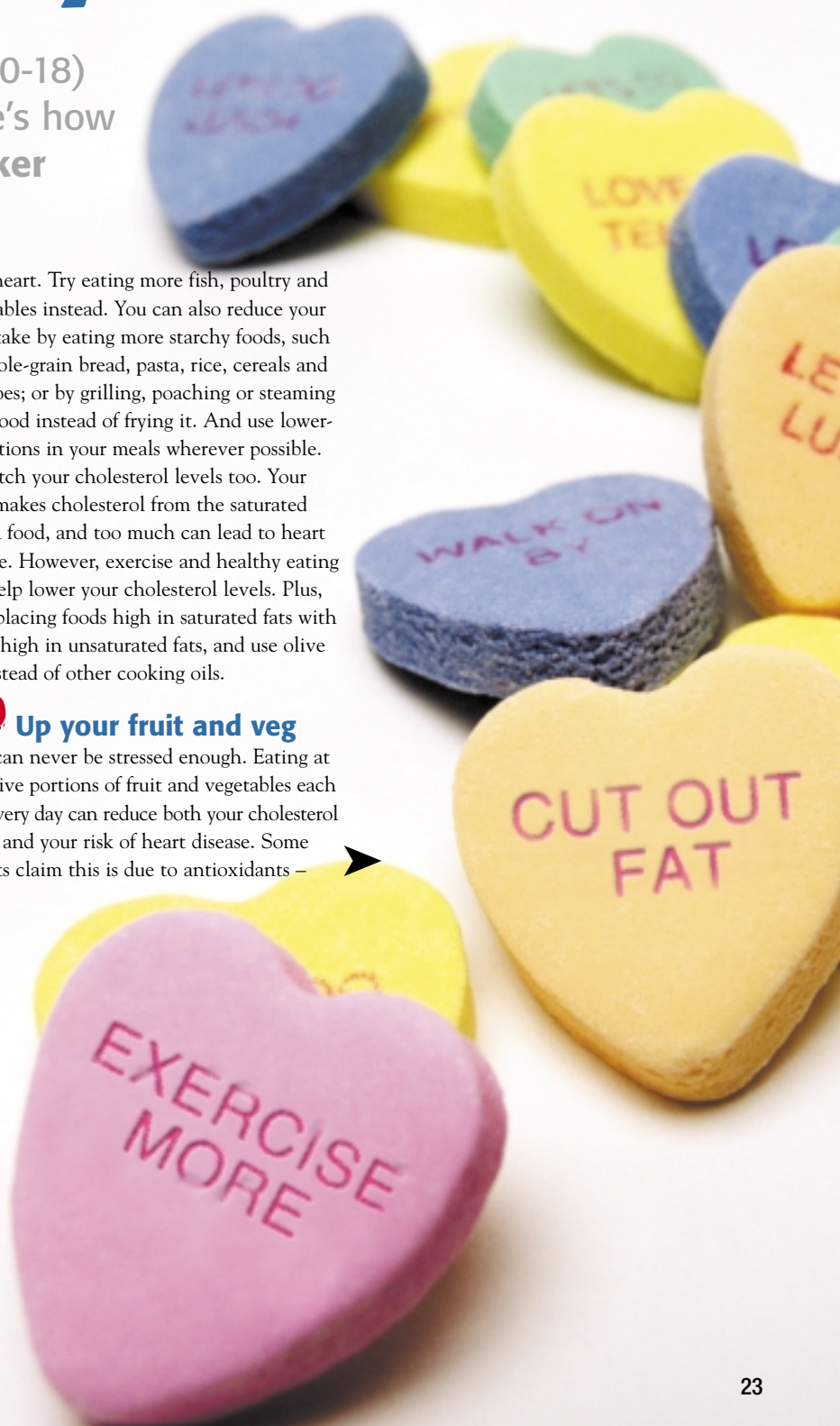
Too much saturated fat from biscuits, crisps, red meat, chips, cakes and dairy products can clog up your arteries and place a strain on

your heart. Try eating more fish, poultry and vegetables instead. You can also reduce your fat intake by eating more starchy foods, such as whole-grain bread, pasta, rice, cereals and potatoes; or by grilling, poaching or steaming your food instead of frying it. And use lower-fat options in your meals wherever possible.

Watch your cholesterol levels too. Your liver makes cholesterol from the saturated fats in food, and too much can lead to heart disease. However, exercise and healthy eating can help lower your cholesterol levels. Plus, try replacing foods high in saturated fats with those high in unsaturated fats, and use olive oil instead of other cooking oils.

4 **Up your fruit and veg**

This can never be stressed enough. Eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each and every day can reduce both your cholesterol levels and your risk of heart disease. Some experts claim this is due to antioxidants –



present in both fruit and vegetables – which help prevent oxidation (the process that allows cholesterol to form). Many types of fruit and vegetables are also rich in potassium – a mineral that can help control blood pressure.

5 Get wise to fish

Oily fish such as herring, kippers, pilchards, sardines, anchovies, trout, salmon, mackerel and fresh tuna contain oils such as omega-3 essential fatty acids. These help reduce your cholesterol levels and can also prevent the dangerous blood clots that cause heart attacks from forming. Try to eat oily fish at least twice a week. Vegetarians can substitute fish oil with flaxseed oil.

6 Take a break

It's a hectic world out there – many people work through lunch, skip meals and eat on the go. It's important to slow down and take a proper break. By going out to lunch, you'll be more inclined to eat a healthy, balanced meal and less likely to snack on processed foods, which are all too often high in fat, salt, sugar and calories, but low in vitamins.

7 Ditch the salt

Most people eat far too much salt, which contains sodium, a substance that can lead to high blood pressure. Use other herbs and spices to add flavour to cooking instead of salt, and don't add it to your food at the table. Eat fewer processed foods such as ready-made meals and tinned soups, as these also have high sodium levels. The recommended maximum daily intake of salt is 6g, but the body only needs around a gram a day (about one-fifth of a teaspoonful).

8 Limit your alcohol

Don't worry, it's not all bad news! Drinking in moderation – that is, one or two units of alcohol per day – can actually have a protective effect on the heart in men aged over 40 and in women who have gone through the menopause.

However, excessive or binge drinking raises your blood pressure, which increases the risk of a stroke and can even lead to heart failure. Men should be aiming to drink no more than 21 units of alcohol a week

and women up to 14 units per week (one unit of alcohol equals half a pint of beer, a small glass of wine or a single pub measure of spirits).

9 Quit smoking

Smoking is one of the major risk factors for coronary heart disease. Nicotine stimulates the body to produce adrenaline, which in turn makes the heart beat faster and raises blood pressure. If you do smoke, stop now. Quitting benefits your heart from day one and, after just two successful non-smoking years, you could halve your risk of a heart attack as well as minimise your risk of lung cancer.

10 Know your heart history

Is there a history of heart disease in your family? If any of your close relatives suffers from high blood pressure, or has suffered strokes or heart attacks below the age of 55, you too could have an increased risk of heart disease. Ask your GP to get your blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked out.

The hidden dangers of heart failure...

The British Heart Foundation is raising awareness of the dangers of heart failure during this year's British Heart Week.

Each year, 63,000 new cases of heart failure are diagnosed, with up to one-third of those people dying within a year. When the heart is failing, it becomes less efficient at pumping blood around the body, both when resting and exercising. Symptoms include breathlessness, swollen ankles and severe tiredness.

Heart failure can change your life and make even a simple set of stairs seem like climbing a mountain. All the more reason, then, to make sure you look after your heart.

How your pharmacist can help...

If you have any heart health concerns, your pharmacist can help in many ways:

- Some pharmacies – especially larger high-street ones – offer blood-pressure tests, though you generally have to pay for them.
- You can also buy blood-pressure monitors and cholesterol-testing kits from most pharmacies.
- Ask your pharmacist for advice on supplements that boost heart health, such as garlic and fish oil capsules, antioxidant supplements (vitamins A, C and E) and selenium tablets.

Heart health contacts

British Heart Foundation: 020 7935 0185
www.bhf.org.uk

The Family Heart Association: 01628 628 638
www.familyheart.org

Blood Pressure Association: 020 8772 4994
www.bpassoc.org.uk

British Hypertension Society: 020 8725 3412
www.hyp.ac.uk/bhs

NHS Smoking Helpline: 0800 169 0169

QUIT Smoking Helpline: 0800 00 22 00

