

HOW NOT TO GET SICK IN INDIA

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As an unsuspecting traveler in my early twenties in India, I began my journey with Ayurveda to heal my digestive system from a persistent cornucopia of parasitic infections. My yoga studies have brought me to India from my home base in New England annually for 15 years now. That's a lot of travel in India! I teach yoga to westerners on tours to India, and am responsible for helping keep the students healthy.

I certainly do lean on Ayurvedic medicines and eating practices to keep the gut in balance. What follows are my top recommendations, including Ayurvedic meal routines and easy to find herbal formulas to pack in your travel bag.

1. Get on the plane with a happy belly. Start now!

This year I traveled right after Christmas, which is historically a bit of a tough time for my gut. I love Christmas cookies! I had a much harder time keeping healthy this year in my travels because I didn't come out of the gate strong. Ayurveda sees what the body is accustomed to as an important element in digestion. If your diet and routines are far from what you see below, you will do well to start practicing some of the food observations here a month before you fly.

2. Eat light.

Your gut, given the chance, is going to manage the changes in atmosphere nicely. But overeating is hard to manage. If you expect to be sitting for long periods of time, avoid eating a lot of food. Avoid overdoing all those amazing delicacies- I know sometimes it feels like you may never see this particular specialty again, but enjoy responsibly, and keep in mind your gut is only able to process the amount of food you can hold in your two palms at each meal.

3. Keep it movin.

I have noticed a direct correlation between constipated types and parasite difficulties. If you are not the type to poop easy, you may consider getting on Triphala before you travel, and staying on a routine of 2-3 tabs before bed while you are in India, up to a few months. I also recommend a short Ayurvedic cleanse before you hit the road. I am happy to consult with you about a cleansing program before you go.

4. Para Cleanse by Banyan Botanicals

I had great results using this formula as a preventative on my 3-week temple tour this winter. It helps keep your system inhospitable to invaders, and is a good helper if you are going to be moving about a lot for a time (which is when you need to be most mindful). Its only helpful if you take it 1-2 tabs, 2-3x/day for at least 2 weeks. I just used it until the bottle was gone.

5. Bolster the immune system.

It is all about the immune system. Again, get strong before you go. Start the diet routines now. Get plenty of rest, bring along some vitamin C.

6. Avoid excessive sugar.

You know the bugs love sugar. Go easy on the chai and the sweets. you can expect if you are in India longer term to have some sweet cravings from the vegetarian, often overcooked food.

7. Rest Up.

I know its so exciting, but avoid over scheduling. You must make sure you are resting enough to give your immunity the time it needs to keep you well.

8. Yoga for digestion.

Lie on your back on the floor and take wind-relieving posture. Bring one knee up alongside the rib cage, keeping the other leg straight. Hold the knee with same-side hand, compressing the ascending (right side) and then descending (left side) colon. You can circle the knee gently. Repeat. Remember never to suppress the urge to pass wind or move the bowels.

9. Try not to snack.

Allowing for space between meals will let your gut completely process each meal. Adding more food into the mix before the stomach is fully emptied can create fermentation, which is the ideal atmosphere for little friend parasites to flourish.

10. Watch where you eat.

Go to places where lots of people are enjoying, good turnover. Its not out of the question to ask to poke your head in the kitchen to be sure its looking well-kept back there. You will get lots of smiles! Avoid raw juices, even though they are always on the menu. They always have white sugar added.

11. Positive Thinking.

You are going to be fine! Be kind to you gut, meditate on clean digestion, be thankful for all of your foods, and know that I have seen many travelers enjoy India without any disturbance.