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Can a Probiotic Help to Prevent Travelers Diarrhea?

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QUESTION – I will soon be travelling to several countries where finding safe drinking water will be a challenge. In the event I eat or drink something that would cause traveler's diarrhea would it be wise to preventatively start taking a probiotic? Is it alright to take loperamide at the same time as taking a probiotic?

ANSWER – There is some evidence that taking a probiotic can help prevent travellers' diarrhea although probiotics are notoriously variable in terms of their activity, with some being more effective than others with respect to this indication. I see no reason why you shouldn't take loperamide with a probiotic should the need arise.

I should point out that diarrhea in gastroenteritis does serve a purpose of clearing out the germs that are causing the problem and, therefore, taking loperamide can sometimes delay recovery.

I usually advise patients to take one of the glucose and electrolyte powders when they get travellers' diarrhea and just use the loperamide for emergencies, travelling, and to get home.

Suggested IFFGD Reading

Thompson, W. *Managing Diarrhea*. IFFGD. Fact Sheet No. 201.

Bonci, L. *Nutrition Strategies for Managing Diarrhea*. IFFGD. Fact Sheet No. 208.

The information in this fact sheet was adapted from the Clinical Corner Section of Digestive Health Matters, *Vol. 18, No. 2.*

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This article is in no way intended to replace the knowledge or diagnosis of your doctor. We advise seeing a physician whenever a health problem arises requiring an expert's care.

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