

# 10 Tips To Avoid Tummy Troubles In Ecuador

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When visiting or moving to a different country, travellers and alike can expect countless joys. Of course, a challenge or two could also pop up during the journey. No matter where you visit or travel in the world, the possibility of stomach upset lurks in the background. Indeed, tummy troubles are the most common health complaint among travellers and newly arrived expats. Stomach upset can be a nasty tag-along however it just comes with the territory and can happen when visiting or moving to any country. Learning how to deal with tummy troubles if they arise while in Ecuador will make sure the experience is the best it can be.

## Several Causes of an Upset Stomach

This truth does not reflect badly on any country. Obviously, travellers or new expat arrivals can encounter isolated instances of poor food preparation or spoiled ingredients along the way.



Such unfortunate incidents can result from... . someone not doing a proper job in handling food . a flaw somewhere between harvest and

plate with contaminated food . drinking contaminated water . exposure to the stomach bug by other means such as swimming in untreated water.

## **Travel Woes**

Besides these types of circumstances resulting in woe for a traveler’s health, stomach upset is often synonymous with travel anyway – just by the nature of the journey itself.

Tourists like to try unfamiliar local foods. Often they have more than one “strange” dish at a single meal. One’s palate – and one’s stomach – is not accustomed to this different menu.

Maybe a traveler can easily acquire a taste for the “new” but it takes a little longer for your digestion to get comfortable with exotic flavors.

Often your stomach simply rebels against these out-of-the-ordinary choices. As well, keep in mind that sometimes celebrating travelers can force too much on their delicate stomachs at the one time. Over-indulgence in delicious local food – mixed with unfamiliar drinks – is a guaranteed recipe for tummy troubles.

## **Top 10 Tips – How To Deal With Tummy Troubles**

1. Remember the most basic rule of hygiene; wash your hands before meals.
2. Use bottled or boiled water to clean teeth.
3. Avoid tap water in Ecuador; it is generally not the safe choice. There are two cities, Cuenca and Cotacachi, where the tap water is safe to drink. Otherwise, choose bottled water and soft drinks. Always check to see that the bottle has an intact seal. These options will be readily available throughout Ecuador – except in the most remote places. If travelers do not want to rely on bottled water or plan to visit remote areas, they will have to purify their water.

### **How To Purify Water**



#### **Boiling Process**

Bringing it to a boil for one minute (or three minutes at altitude) is a basic but effective means of purification. Of course, this method does require you to have a kettle or pot for boiling.

### **Chemical Tablets**

Many travelers prefer chemical purification using small, light, and easy-to-carry iodine and chemical tablets. Although iodine tincture is especially effective against amoebas and giardia, this solution is unsafe for pregnant women, babies, and people with thyroid disease.

### **Portable Water Purifiers**

This option provides a complete purification method, but the systems can sometimes be expensive and bulky for carrying. Look for backpacker or camper purifying systems — they tend to be smaller and more lightweight.

4. Since you can pick up stomach “bugs” from swimming in unclean water, choose only chlorinated pools.
5. Avoid beaches near densely-populated centers or sewage outlets.
6. Never eat uncovered food which has been lying out for a while anywhere. If the food is sitting outdoors, then heat and insects could certainly turn any dish into a toxic choice.
7. With regards to food and drink in Ecuador, avoid ice made from tap water, fruit juices with added tap water, raw vegetables and salads, dairy products and ice cream made from unpasteurized milk, as well as undercooked, partially cooked, or reheated fish, crustaceans, meat or eggs. Freshly prepared hot food and fruit and vegetables which you peel yourself are the safest choices.
8. Treat the condition in the correct manner. The usual stomach upset can include a bout of diarrhea, vomiting, and stomach cramps. The good news is that it passes in a couple of days. The best remedies are rest and drinking plenty of fluids. While you feel sick, aim to drink at least three liters a day or a couple of glasses for every loose bowel movement. Avoid milk and alcohol as well as caffeine-based and fizzy drinks. Modern medical opinion suggests that if you feel like eating – do so – rather than fasting.



9. Replace lost salt. Travelers can find rehydration salts at Ecuadorian pharmacies. Replenish lost salt with these products or try a homemade solution; add a generous pinch of salt and three to four tablespoons of sugar to a liter of clean water.
10. Visit a doctor if the condition does not run its usual course. Consult a doctor in the case of symptoms lasting for longer than five days, blood in stools, high fever, or constant and severe abdominal pain. Most Ecuadorian towns have facilities for testing stool samples. This means of diagnosis is available at minimal cost and takes only a few hours. Generally, people have to buy their own sample pot (caja de muestra) from a pharmacy.

## **Effective Treatment**

Anti-diarrhea drugs only suppress symptoms but do not solve the underlying problem. Diarrhea caused by bacteria can be treated with a course of antibiotics like Ciprofloxacin which is available over the counter in most Ecuadorian pharmacies. Ciprofloxacin does not work, however, against amoebic dysentery (amoebiasis). This condition can be very serious but can be treated with metronidazole (Flagyl).

As well, Ciprofloxacin does not work against giardia – a parasitic infection with symptoms such as sudden, watery, and extra-bad-smelling diarrhea, bloating, fatigue, and excessive rotten-egg-smelling gas. These symptoms can come and go but could last for weeks if not treated with metronidazole or tinidazole (Fasigyn). Avoid alcohol if taking either of these medications.