

'Don't drink the water' fair warning to travelers

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Ah vacation! A time to relax in a place that sounds like a cool breeze — Cancun — or a romantic port of call for a love boat — Acapulco.

But without a little caution, that cool breeze can turn into something very unpleasant — *Montezuma's revenge*.

"In any tropical country, bacteria proliferates easily in the moist, hot climate," said Dr. Tom Madhavan, a Farmington Hills specialist in travel medicine.

"Plus you can also see water system breakdowns and other problems that are beyond your control."

Mexico, with its popular beaches, hotels and often low prices is a favorite vacation destination for many, but despite the modern look, the saying "don't drink the water" still applies.

"The water problems continue to dumbfound us," said Rosemond Dewart, chief of the travelers section of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Ga.

"You should drink bottled water and avoid raw vegetables," Madhavan said. "Make sure your food is well cooked."

In fact, you should go a step further and buy bottled water at a pharmacy or other store, not from street vendors, he said.

"When I was in India, street kids were selling bottled water," Madhavan said. "But they were filling up bottles with tap water that wasn't safe."

Food should also be a concern. "You should only eat fruits you can peel yourself," said Holzer. Lutz of the Travel Agent in Birmingham. "The pesticides they use can cause stomach problems."

And the fertilizer can be human waste, which can contaminate raw fruits and vegetables, said Dewart.

"The water used to be more of a problem, but you still have to be careful," said Amy Moreno of Kimberley Travel in Rochester. "If you stay at the main hotels and eat at the nicer restaurants you won't have a problem."

Travelers should not consume dairy products in Mexico, because they aren't pasteurized, Dewart said.

Moreno said the tourist boards and other sources offer travel advisories to keep travel agents updated as to potential problem areas.

But Madhavan said travelers

should not only do a little research concerning any foreign country, they should see a doctor before traveling abroad.

"It's important, especially for the elderly," he said. "The combination of travel, the added exertion and the fact that older people are at higher risk for some things makes it a good idea to have a checkup."

Mad Mexico is not the only country where travelers should take precautions.

"We had one customer who was traveling to Angel Falls in Venezuela," Moreno said. "She had to have shots, treatments and take some medication before going there. It can be pretty involved."

And beyond Latin America, many other countries pose different health risks, Madhavan said. The water in Moscow and St. Petersburg is not safe to drink, he said. And there are even isolated problems in Europe at times. And eating the spicy food of India cause some gastrointestinal discomfort to some.

For the most part, watching what you eat and drink is a good way to avoid trouble, Madhavan said.

Speaking of drink, Madhavan said the *cerveza fria* and other bottled alcohol is not contaminated. But alcohol is probably something to drink in moderation while traveling.

For many countries and even some parts of the United States, immunization may be necessary.

When packing, travelers should take their own travel kit, which should include Tylenol or other pain reliever, some Peptol Bismol, cold tablets and other remedies that either aren't easily available in foreign countries. Along with immunizations, boosters for tetanus and some childhood diseases may be needed.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a fax line and voice message service to inform travelers of precautions, immunizations, potential health problems and other information. The fax number is (404) 332-4565 and the voice mail number is (404) 332-4559.



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Preventive measures are best preparation

For many travelers, a trip to a doctor's office or clinic could be the first part of careful preparation.

For many destinations, both in the United States and abroad, vaccinations or other preventive measures are the best preparation.

Some required immunizations could include: Yellow fever, which occurs in parts of tropical Africa and South America; Hepatitis B; Immune Globulin; meningococcal meningitis, which occurs in Nepal, India, parts of the Middle East, East Africa and more recently Cancun, Mexico; plague;

rabies; tuberculosis-BCG; typhoid; typhus; haemophilus influenzae type B; poliomyelitis and malaria.

Coccidioidomycosis, caused by a fungus, is fairly common in the California valleys, Arizona and New Mexico.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which is carried by ticks, most often in the North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, Tennessee, Oklahoma and Texas. Histoplasmosis is a fungal disease found in the Ohio Valley and states bordering the Mississippi and Ohio rivers.

POLICE/FIRE CALLS

Listed below are some of the Farmington area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week.

■ VANDALISM

The driver's side of a 1989 black Pontiac parked at the Metro Music Cafe on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills was scratched with a key on its side July 17, causing \$500 in damage.

The rear window of a black 1990 Chevy Caprice parked on Lorikey July 17-18 was broken, causing \$200 in damage.

The rear window of a black 1983 Chevy Camaro parked on Oxford in Farmington Hills July 18 was shattered, causing \$300 in damage.

The passenger door lock was damaged on a 1989 Ford Mustang convertible parked at American Blind and Wallpaper on Orchard Lake July 16, causing \$400 in damage.

A blue 1993 Toyota MRS parked at the Muirwood Apartments on Lakeview Court in Farmington Hills was scratched on both sides July 3-10, causing \$483 in damage.

Smoke bombs were set off in the vestibule of a business on Orchard Lake Road, causing \$40 worth of damage July 16.

■ THEFT

Three hubcaps worth \$240 were stolen from a 1993 black Dodge Caravan parked at the Bed, Bath and Beyond on Orchard Lake in Farmington Hills July 15.

An appointment book worth \$10 and jewelry worth \$640 were stolen from a residence at the River Valley Apartments on Nine Mile in Farmington Hills July 17. A 13-inch Quesar color TV and a VCR worth \$400 were stolen from a residence on Jacksonville in Farmington Hills July 17-18.

Four wheels and hubcaps worth \$400 were stolen from a red 1991 Chevy Baretta parked at the Kendallwood Apartments on Wiloughby in Farmington Hills July 17-18.

A garden trailer worth \$2,500 was stolen from the U-Haul dealership on Grand River in Farmington Hills July 17-18.

Cassette tapes and jewelry worth \$300 were stolen from a 1992 white Mazda MX3 parked on Eldon in Farmington Hills July 18-19.

A diamond wedding ring worth \$3,000 was stolen from the Muirwood Apartments on Pine Grove

Court in Farmington Hills July 19.

A wallet with credit cards and \$500 in cash was stolen from a white 1988 GMC van parked on Ontago in Farmington Hills July 18-19.

A vending machine at Botsford Hospital on Grand River in Farmington Hills came up \$272 short July 12-19.

■ BREAK-INS

An AM/FM cassette stereo worth \$300 and dart set worth \$50 were stolen from a red 1992 Geo Tracker parked at the Muirwood Apartments on Woodridge in Farmington Hills July 2-19. The break-in caused \$300 in damage to the car.

A stereo amplifier worth \$275, a pair of men's Roller Blades worth \$220 and \$40 in cash were stolen from a silver 1987 Ford Ranger parked at the Muirwood Apartments on Woodview July 19. The passenger door lock was punched during the break-in, causing \$300 in damage.

Approximately \$500 in cash was stolen in a recent burglary on Smithfield in Farmington. Entry was believed to have been made through a rear screen window, according to police reports.

■ AUTO THEFT

A 1992 maroon Mercury Grand Marquis worth \$20,000 with a set of Callaway golf clubs worth \$2,250 was stolen from the Kendallwood Apartments on Chatham in Farmington Hills July 10-11.

An attempted theft of a brown 1989 Mercury from a garage at a residence on Farmington in Farmington Hills July 17 caused \$101 in damage to the driver's door.

A 1993 Ford stake truck worth \$23,000 was stolen from Tom Holzer Ford on Grand River July 14-19.

■ BAD CHECKS

Two checks for landscaping supplies totaling \$1,304.63 written to Angelo's Supplies on Eight Mile in Farmington Hills between June 16 and July 3 did not have enough money in the account to cover them.

■ GUNMAN ESCAPES

A gunman escaped with more than \$4,000 Saturday morning following a hold-up at the Livonia Elias Brothers Big Boy restaur-

ant, 19190 Middlebelt, police said.

Employees were herded into the freezer at gunpoint but nobody was seriously hurt in the incident, according to police reports.

An investigation into the robbery was continuing Monday. There are no suspects.

Witnesses described the gunman as black, 6 feet tall and 200-210 pounds with a stocky build. He was wearing a black hat, black turtleneck shirt and blue jeans.

Police seek 2 suspects in robbery

Farmington Hills police are looking for two men in connection with an armed robbery Monday. Police gave the following account: A 17-year-old Livonian was walking south on Orchard Lake south of Folsom in the southern end of the city at about 3:20 p.m. Two men walked past and one of them grabbed a gold chain worth \$700 from around his neck.

The victim and one of the men — described as an 18-year-old with acne, white shorts a white T-shirt and tennis shoes — scuffled. The other man — described as an 18-year-old wearing a blue shirt, light blue jeans and tennis shoes — pulled out a nickel-plated pistol, possibly a 9mm, and threatened the victim.

Police ask anyone with information to call 474-6181.

Cops arrest man, 33, in sexual assault

Farmington Hills police arrested a 33-year-old Cohoctah, Mich., man in connection with the sexual assault of a 25-year-old Farmington Hills woman.

Police responded to the reported assault at about 9 a.m. Tuesday in the Grand River/Middlebelt area. Police said the woman knew the suspect, who was being held in the Hills jail Tuesday night.

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