

The Survival Guide to Thailand

The purpose of this guide is to provide practical information on how to survive in a foreign criminal justice and prison system. It aims to inform you of your rights, point you towards sources of help, and suggest ways of making the best of your situation. The guide will help you to understand

- the legal and prison system
- conditions for receiving visits, mail and money
- how to appeal, or apply for a pardon
- the possibility of transfer to another prison, or back to the UK.

You will also find a glossary of basic legal terms, to help you to understand the legal process – and what your options are – from the time you are detained through to your release.

The guide has other uses too. One of these is to give you an understanding of the country you are held in – for example, the culture, religion and political system. Normal feelings of isolation and frustration at being imprisoned far from home are likely to increase if you don't understand the customs and language around you. There is an appendix of key words and phrases to help you communicate.

Staying physically and mentally healthy is very important. The guide provides tips on keeping fit, diet, how to prevent infections and what to do if you fall ill. You will also find suggestions for coping with the stress and boredom of imprisonment – from meditation to education.

Occasionally you will read comments in quotation marks. These are observations of ex-prisoners, drawn from their first-hand experiences, which you may find helpful.

We hope you find this Guide useful. We are aware that things change constantly, so any comments you have are always welcome. Please send them to Prisoners Abroad.

Who can help?

If you find yourself in trouble with the law in a foreign country there are two immediate sources of help you can turn to: the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the charity Prisoners Abroad both offer advice and support to British nationals detained, arrested and jailed overseas.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

The FCO is represented overseas by its Embassies (High Commissioners in Commonwealth countries). Both employ consular officers, and one of their jobs is to provide help and advice to any Briton who gets into difficulty in a foreign country. If you have been arrested or detained the authorities are obliged to inform the British Consul, and consular staff aim to make contact with you within 24 hours of being notified. **It is your right to**

- have the Consul informed of your detention
- meet and communicate with consular staff
- report to them any mistreatment you might have suffered.

What the Consul can do

- explain the nature of the charge and the country's legal system, so you will know what is happening
- provide a list of English-speaking local lawyers
- explain the prison system, including visits, mail, work, medical care and any welfare services available.

If you wish, the Consul can also

- inform your family and keep them up-to-date on developments
- visit you in prison
- take up complaints about ill-treatment or alleged discrimination
- help with the transfer of funds from Britain
- supply information on obtaining a transfer to the UK.

What the Consul cannot do

- get you out of jail
- give legal advice, find a lawyer or intervene in the legal process

- investigate your case
- provide money for any purpose
- obtain better conditions or treatment than are available for local prisoners
- forward parcels to you.

If you have dual nationality and are imprisoned in the country of your other nationality the British Consul cannot assist you formally, under international law. Consular staff will, however, provide whatever informal assistance the local authorities will allow.

If you do not know how to contact the Consulate, ask relatives or friends to telephone the FCO in London on 020 7270 1500 and ask for the Consular desk officer for the country concerned, or write to them at:

2 Old Admiralty Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2PA

The FCO also has a network of qualified lawyers willing to do *pro bono* work for British prisoners overseas. What this means is that you may be able to get independent legal advice, free of charge, under certain circumstances. For instance, if

- you cannot get legal aid
- the FCO has concerns about your case
- your lawyer has requested information on human rights or fair trials procedure.

The service is not a substitute for hiring a local lawyer, and any request for *pro bono* advice will be referred on by the FCO, so you must write to them at the address above.

Prisoners Abroad

For more than twenty years the charity Prisoners Abroad has offered practical support and advice to Britons imprisoned overseas. It is the only UK charity providing this service and it is available to all, whether guilty or innocent, convicted or not. Prisoners Abroad is concerned with your health and welfare, both during your imprisonment and also on your return to the UK, through their Aftercare service. They can also provide support and advice to your family during your imprisonment, if you so wish.

What Prisoners Abroad (PA) can do

On seeking help from PA, you will be assigned a named caseworker who will be your point of contact for advice and information. The type of assistance they can offer will vary from country to country, but generally they can provide you with information, in English, on

- the criminal justice system of the country, legal aid and court proceedings
- finding a lawyer
- prison conditions and your rights as a prisoner.

They can also

- help with organising the translation of documents
- communicate with the legal, prison and consular authorities
- help if your family needs information – for example, how often they can write to you, what they can send you, how to send money, how to go about arranging a visit.

If you have been convicted, your caseworker can supply information on the possibility of applying for

- an appeal, parole, remission or a pardon
- transfer to another prison in the country
- transfer to complete your sentence in the UK.

What Prisoners Abroad cannot do

- recommend or pay for a particular lawyer
- investigate your case or advise on the charges you are facing
- pay for bail, fines or your ticket home
- get you out of jail.

Financial assistance

Some financial help is available from Prisoners Abroad if you or your family have no other source of funds. It can provide

- for essential medical or dental treatment
- vitamin supplements and extra food in poorer countries
- bedding, where this is not provided by the prison authorities
- one-off grants for items like toiletries and stationery.

There is also a small budget to assist with travel grants for family members living on state benefits. Ask your caseworker for details.

Families

Sometimes prisoners' families also need help and information. When this is the case they are always welcome to talk, in confidence, to a caseworker at PA. Also, if they wish, they can be put in touch with the relatives of other prisoners or a local support group.

Passing the time

Boredom and loneliness can be as much of a problem as prison conditions. Prisoners Abroad has several services it can offer. These include

- sending you magazines, newspapers and paperback books
- donating paperbacks to the prison library
- supplying you with International Freepost envelopes so that you can write to your friends and family – and keep in touch with PA – without having to pay for postage
- matching you with a penpal who shares your interests
- sending you PA's newsletter. Aimed at prisoners and their families, it includes articles and poems by both current and ex-prisoners.

There is also the possibility of funding for educational courses. If you are interested, you should write to Prisoners Abroad for further information.

Preparing for release

Some countries help prisoners to plan for their release – but some don't. PA can supply you with advice and information to help you adjust. This includes practical steps you should take, such as

- getting the right papers together, especially ID (birth certificate, national insurance number, passport or emergency travel documents)
- sorting out your ticket home
- informing the consular office that you are about to leave
- contacting Prisoners Abroad's Aftercare service.

What is likely to happen to you immediately after release depends on the country. Some deport foreign nationals straight away, in others you may be held at

Immigration, and others do nothing. You will find more information on what to expect in the country- specific section of this booklet.

If you want to return to the UK, but do not have enough money to buy a ticket, the Consul may agree to pay if you are willing to sign a document called an Undertaking to Repay. This means the FCO can keep your passport until you have repaid them.

After your release

Sometimes people find that a new set of problems arises once they have left prison. You may find yourself ready for life on the outside but not prepared for living in the UK. Possibly you have never lived in Britain and have no ties there, or perhaps you have lost touch with friends and family. You may simply want to talk to another person who understands what you have been through, to help you work out what to do next.

When you first arrive back in Britain you can visit Prisoners Abroad on weekdays between 10 am and 4 pm for advice, to take a shower, use the temporary luggage store, make essential phone calls or use a computer. If you have no belongings Prisoners Abroad may be able to help with basic toiletries and finding suitable clothing. If you know your release date in advance it is best to write and tell your caseworker when you are likely to arrive and what help you think you might need. If you have no money and nowhere to go, PA's Aftercare service can help with

- advice on finding emergency accommodation in the London area
- claiming welfare benefits, including emergency benefit payments if you are destitute
- making appointments with doctors and dentists
- putting you in touch with local agencies if you are not returning to the London area.

Later on you may want advice on housing, looking for work, applying for training or getting counselling. Prisoners Abroad can refer you to the right agency. PA also offers advice and support by telephone and letter to people returning – and their families – who live outside London.

For all services, **Prisoners Abroad** can be contacted at

89 - 93 Fonthill Road

London N4 3JH

England

Telephone 00 44 (0)20 7561 6821

(Mondays to Fridays, 9.30 am to 5.30 pm)

Email: info@prisonersabroad.org.uk

Website: www.prisonersabroad.org.uk

Other sources of help

Here you can find information on support and advice for prisoners serving sentences, for after their return to the UK, and for prisoners' families.

While you are in prison

Prison Fellowship International

Prison Fellowship is a Christian organisation that gives support and help to people of all religions and those with none. It has members in 88 countries; they can visit or write to prisoners. If you obtain a transfer back to a UK prison, PF can help with transport so your family can visit. They also work with ex-prisoners and their families through their local group network.

Prison Fellowship, England and Wales

PO Box 945

Maldon

Essex CM9 4EW

Tel: 00 44 (0)1621 843 232 Fax: (0)1621 843 303

Email: prisonfellowship@dial.pipex.com

Prison Fellowship, Scotland

110 St James Road

Glasgow G4 0PS

Tel/fax: 00 44 (0)141 552 1288

Email: prisonfellowship@lineone.net

Prison Fellowship, Northern Ireland

39 University Street

Belfast BT7 1FY

Tel/fax: 00 44 (0)2890 243 691

Email: info@pfni.org

The Salvation Army

They can arrange to visit prisoners overseas through their international service.

The Salvation Army International HQ

101 Queen Victoria Street

London EC4P 4EP

Tel: 00 44 (0) 20 7332 0101 Fax: 00 44 (0) 20 7236 4981

Practical help back in the UK

Prison Fellowship (see above)

The Salvation Army

They can offer support for returning prisoners and their families through local centres. This includes clothing, cheap meals and counselling. Where available, emergency accommodation may be found.

Salvation Army UK Helpline: 020 7367 4888, Mondays to Fridays, 8 am to 4 pm, or contact your local branch.

Support for Families

Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups

A national organisation for prisoners' families, they can provide information on support services for families across the UK.

Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups

Second Floor, Cambridge House

Cambridge Grove

London W6 0LE

Tel: 020 8741 4578 Fax: 020 8748 5867

Email: info@fpfsg.demon.co.uk

Website: www.fpfsg.org.uk

International Social Service (UK)

They help families and individuals separated by international boundaries, and can link up with colleagues in over 100 different countries.

ISS (UK)

Cranmer House

39 Brixton Road

London SW9 6DD

Tel: 020 7735 8941 Fax: 020 7582 0696

Email: issuk@charity.vfree.com

Legal advice

In addition to the FCO's *pro bono* panel of lawyers there are other legal advice organisations you can approach.

Advice on Individual Rights in Europe (AIRE)

AIRE provides information and advice free of charge on international human rights law, including rights of individuals under European Community law and the European Convention on Human Rights, but not on any individual country's legal system.

The AIRE Centre

Third Floor, 17 Red Lion Square

London WC1R 4QH

Tel: 020 7831 4276 Fax: 020 7404 7760

Advice Line: 020 7831 3850 (Mon-Thurs 2-5pm)

Email: aire@btinternet.com

Website: www.airecentre.org

The European Legal Advice Service

Offers advice to people facing criminal charges within the EU but outside their country of origin, and also on civil and human rights, including the European Convention on Human Rights. ELAS researches issues such as language and translation difficulties and extradition. The service is initially free of charge, but if you are given advice you will be asked for a financial contribution.

If you would like to contact the European Legal Advice Service, please write to Gudrun Parasie care of Prisoners Abroad, 89-93 Fonthill Rd, London, N4 3JH.

Website: www.webstar.nl/~stew/ela/

Fair Trials Abroad

FTA seeks justice and fair legal representation for EU citizens outside their country of residence. If you feel you have been unfairly arrested or tried, in Europe or elsewhere in the world, FTA can provide free legal advice and assistance. (If FTA makes referrals to other lawyers or firms, these may charge a fee).

Fair Trials Abroad Trust

Bench House

Ham Street

Richmond

Surrey TW10 7HR

Tel: 020 8332 2800 Fax: 020 8332 2810

Email: stephenjakobi@compuserve.com or elip@btinternet.com

Website: www.webstar.nl/FTA

Freedom Now

Provides legal intervention work for a small number of British prisoners overseas, especially those charged with very serious offences or given very long sentences or the death penalty. There is no charge for this service.

Contact: Andrew McCooey

36 West Street

Sittingbourne

Kent ME10 1AP

Tel: 01795 470 686 Fax: 01795 424 497

Email: amccooey@aol.com

The Redress Trust

Information and advice for people who are, or have been, the victims of torture.

The Redress Trust

4 Dean's Court

St. Paul's Churchyard

London EC4V 5AA

Tel: 020 7329 7322 Fax: 020 7248 5397

Email: redresstrust@gn.apc.org

Website: www.redress.org

The Thailand Survival Guide

This part of the Guide is specific to the country in which you are being held. Whether you have been recently detained or are already serving a sentence, you will find information that aims to give you a better understanding of the country, its customs and its laws.

The opening section provides a brief summary of the culture, religion and recent political events. This is followed by detailed information on the legal and prison systems, and your rights – as a British subject, within the laws of the country and, where it applies, under international law.

Staying healthy is important for people in prison abroad, so you will find a section on what medical care you can get and what steps to take if you need more specialised treatment. To help you communicate these and other needs (and understand the answers) there is a glossary of key words and phrases. They are listed in English and translated into one or more local languages, with 'how to pronounce' (phonetic) suggestions alongside.

Country background

Thailand is about the size of France, has a population of 60 million (65% under twenty-five) and is the only South East Asian country never to have been colonised by a Western power. It is a monarchy (the official name is The Kingdom of Thailand), has an elected Prime Minister, and the main religion is Buddhism.

The monarchy

The Thai monarchy dates back more than 700 years. Since 1932 it has been a 'constitutional monarchy', which means the King's power is limited by a written constitution. In 1988 King Bhumibol became the longest-reigning monarch in Thai history. The royal family is deeply respected and is seen as a unifying force in society. **The worst thing you can do is to criticize the royal family, even indirectly.** For example, you should never step on a coin or banknote, as it is the same as treading on the King's face, and you must always stand when you hear the national anthem. If you don't, you will be insulting the nation as well as the monarch.

Religion and customs

Over 90% of Thais are Theravada Buddhists and Buddhism has a strong influence on daily life. Monks come just below the King in the social hierarchy. A monk cannot be handed anything directly and women mustn't stand near or brush against a monk. All Buddha images are sacred. The feet are considered the dirtiest part of the human body, so you must never point your feet at a sacred image. For the same reason, you should never sit with your feet pointing towards a person, or put your feet on a chair or pillow.

Other Thai 'dos and don'ts' include

- never touch a Thai person's head – it is the most sacred part of the human body
- never eat, pass things or shake hands with the left hand, it is considered unhygienic
- remember that displays of affection towards people of the same sex are more acceptable than towards the opposite sex.

Politics and the economy

Thailand was an 'absolute monarchy' until 1932 – the King had absolute power. The next 60 years saw a mixture of civilian and military governments, but since 1992 there have been national multi-party elections with the peaceful transfer of power. Anti-corruption and pro-democracy protests during the 1990s led to the drawing up of a new constitution by an independent body. Approved in 1997, it grants the most extensive democratic and individual rights Thailand has ever seen.

The Thai economy has seen radical restructuring since the economic crash of 1997 and now has an annual 5% growth rate.

The Criminal Justice system of Thailand

Being arrested and put on trial in a foreign country can be a bewildering and even terrifying experience, especially if you don't understand the language and don't know your rights within the law.

Although the 1997 Thai Constitution confers extensive legal and democratic rights on every individual, in practice these are not always upheld. This chapter will help you to understand the Thai criminal justice system by explaining each stage, from the initial allegation of the offence, to being arrested and charged through to remand, trial, the sentencing stages and beyond. It also offers some guidance to your rights – what should be happening and when – plus pointers on the best way to deal with your situation, and what support may be available to you as a British national.

You can learn about how to apply for an appeal, a King's Pardon or a transfer back to a UK prison, and how you might be able to get time off your sentence (remission). You will also find a short glossary of common legal terms at the end of this section.

Arrest and remand

No matter which country you find yourself in, if you are facing charges it is essential that you inform the British Embassy or Consulate as soon as possible after your arrest. **It is your right to do so.** Consular staff cannot give legal advice, but can explain the legal system of Thailand and the nature of the charge(s), when it is brought. They can also provide a list of lawyers, some of whom speak English.

As a general rule, Thai law states that you may only be arrested, detained or imprisoned when a criminal warrant has been issued, but there are many exceptions to this rule. You may be arrested without a warrant if a police officer

- finds you breaking the law, or attempting to break the law
- suspects that you intend to break the law by having in your possession a weapon or other article which can be used to commit an offence
- believes there are reasonable grounds to suspect that you have committed an offence and are about to run away
- if a person who has filed a criminal complaint against you requests your arrest.

On being detained or arrested by the police you should be notified of your rights. Sometimes this doesn't happen, therefore you should know your rights. They include

- the right to inform the British Consul of your arrest
- the right to remain silent
- the right to inform a relative or friend and to be visited at a reasonable time
- the right to consult in private with a lawyer
- if you are ill, the right to be examined by a doctor.

Following arrest you will be taken to a police headquarters where an official decides whether you should be kept in custody or granted provisional release (which means that you are still under investigation, but not detained). You will normally be held for 48 hours at a police station, up to a maximum of a week if longer is needed to investigate. Conditions may well be cramped, but you will be fed and there are fewer restrictions than in prison. You should be able to make phone calls, buy extra food and have visitors. After that you must be taken to court. If they want to keep you in custody, a warrant of detention will be issued. Although you have the right to remain silent, you may find that at this point the authorities will often attempt (or even make threats) to get you to speak. There have also been reports that interpreters who show up at police stations are paid to obtain confessions. You should not admit to anything or sign anything, and report any intimidation you may experience (or have already) to the Consul.

Once detained or imprisoned, you may only be released by a warrant of release. These are issued, for example, if a court concludes that there are no grounds for prosecution, or if the Public Prosecutor considers that detention is no longer warranted, has withdrawn the charge(s), or has not brought the charge(s) within the specified time period.

In the bulk of cases, the police do obtain a warrant prior to arresting someone. You should be aware that the official must notify you of its contents, and you have the right to ask the official to show it to you. The grounds for issuing a warrant of arrest are that

- you are reasonably suspected to have committed an offence
- you have no fixed place of residence
- the crime you're being accused of is punishable by a sentence of three or more years
- you have failed to abide by a summons to go to court, or it is suspected that you will not appear for court, or that you will tamper with evidence

- whilst under provisional release you were asked to make a higher bond or better security for your bail and you failed to do so.

How long can I be held before I am formally charged?

The length of time you can be held without being formally charged depends upon the maximum sentence your alleged crime carries. For offences carrying up to six months imprisonment ('petty offences') you can be held for a maximum of three days; for a sentence of six months to ten years, a maximum of 48 days; for ten years or more, 84 days. In the latter two cases the court has power to grant several remands of not more than twelve days each. You will be taken to court for each remand hearing and you must be charged by the last day of the remand period. (If this falls on a national holiday or a weekend, the last hearing will be on the nearest working day). If the authorities need longer to carry out the investigation before bringing charges, they can ask the court for more time to hold you. Note that remand for narcotics and complex fraud charges can be lengthy.

While you are on remand you will normally be held in the prison local to your arrest. In Bangkok this will be one of the prisons in the Lard Yao complex. If you are held on a drugs charge it will be Bombat Narcotics Remand Prison. You will be able to wear your own clothes while in prison, but special 'uniforms' are issued for court appearances, and you will be transported in shackles. If your belongings have been confiscated and you have no money, the consular office can supply an 'arrest kit' – a towel and basic toiletries. .

The Inquiry

You cannot be formally charged without the Prosecutor having conducted an inquiry into the offence you are being charged with. In law, this should start without delay. You have the right to have a lawyer, or other person nominated by yourself, present during any interrogation. The inquiry official has the right to collect all kinds of evidence to make the case against you, but the law requires that there be no deception, threat or promise involved in obtaining any statement about the charge. Bear in mind that

- the Thai authorities may not always follow these conditions, and
- any statement so obtained is technically 'inadmissible in evidence', according to the Constitution.

Once the inquiry is complete your file is passed to the Public Prosecutor, with an opinion attached as to whether you should be formally charged. From this point on, your case is in the hands of the Public Prosecutor.

What happens when I am charged?

After being formally charged with an offence, you have additional rights

- the right to read the file of the preliminary examination or trial (if they have already happened) and to obtain copies of documents contained in the file(s)
- the right to inspect the evidence intended for use against you.

It is common practice for the police to produce a document, written in Thai, that they claim is a record of arrest and a denial of the offence. They will want you to sign this document, but you are not obliged to do so. You should never sign anything unless you fully understand its contents, which means that you can read it yourself or you've had it translated from beginning to end by someone you trust. An alternative is to write your own statement and pay to have it translated into Thai. That way, both you and your lawyer are working from the same statement throughout the investigation and trial.

Provisional release

You may be permitted release from custody whilst you remain under investigation or during the course of your trial. This is called provisional release and you have the right to apply for it with or without bail, and either before or after being charged. The exception is if you have been charged with an offence that carries a sentence of three or more years. Then you must provide bail in order to be granted release. In all other cases it may be granted without bail.

If you have not yet been charged, but are held under a warrant of detention, you will have to apply to the inquiry official or the Public Prosecutor for provisional release. The maximum provisional release before you've been charged is six months, and is only effective during the inquiry up to the time the court accepts the charge. In all other cases, your application will be considered by the court. If you are denied release, you have the right to appeal the decision to a higher court.

Will I be granted provisional release?

In deciding whether you should be granted provisional release, the authorities will consider such factors as

- the seriousness of the offence
- the circumstances of your case
- the likelihood of you staying in Thailand to face the charges
- the possibility of danger to the public in releasing you.

As a general rule, release will be granted unless it is deemed inappropriate because of any of the above points. In most cases, the judge (or Prosecutor) has a lot of discretion over whether to release you or not, but in some cases they have no discretion. For example, release is not available for 'category one' drugs possession or trafficking charges, unless the quantity involved is very small and for personal use (see '**Narcotics**' under '**Categories of charges**' below).

For minor offences, the best time to apply for release is immediately after your arrest, while you are still being held at a police station. Otherwise, it may be possible to arrange release and/or bail via your lawyer at the court.

Bail

When bail is required, the amount can range from a few hundred to thousands of pounds, depending on the nature of your offence(s). It is rarely granted to foreigners unless they have business interests in the country. Bail conditions, as they are understood in the UK (such as reporting periodically to an officer of the court, or being restricted to your residence) do not exist in Thailand. The police will almost certainly want your passport – bear in mind that once the legal proceedings are completed your lawyer must ask for its return. The British Embassy will assist if you have any problems getting it back.

If bail is granted, it is likely that a court date will be fixed six to eight weeks from the date of your arrest. You should be free to travel within the country during this period, but if you fail to attend on the required date your bail monies will be forfeited and a warrant for your arrest will be issued.

Lawyers

The Consulate cannot provide legal advice, but it can supply you with a list of legal firms that employ English-speaking lawyers. Prisoners Abroad can also supply information about legal aid, court proceedings and how to go about finding a lawyer. Be warned: never hire a lawyer suggested by the police, or one that just turns up at the police station or court. There have been reports in the past of such lawyers disappearing with clients' money. Some people have recommended contacting the

Thai Law Society in Bangkok. All their lawyers are registered with the Bar Association and are considered to be trustworthy. In addition they may be able to provide a lawyer specialising in the type of crime you are charged with.

Fees for private lawyers vary greatly, as does the quality of service. There are no fixed rates, and all lawyers will ask for some money before they begin work. Most will accept a 'deposit' – any lawyer asking for the full amount at the outset should not be trusted. Many people find they are forced to change their initial 'not guilty' plea to 'guilty' simply because they cannot afford the fees that a long trial will bring.

If you do not have your own lawyer, you may be entitled to a court-appointed one. The court must ask whether or not you have a lawyer

- if the crime carries with it the threat of capital punishment
- if the crime is punishable by imprisonment
- if you were less than eighteen years old when you were charged.

In capital cases, the court must appoint a lawyer on your behalf; in the second example the court will appoint a lawyer if you state that you want one.

It is possible that you will be allowed legal aid for lesser offences, but it is not automatic. You are entitled to request it, but you must prove to the court that you are impoverished. You must accept the lawyer that you are given, and you will not be able to change without the agreement of the court. Court-appointed lawyers are usually recent law school graduates seeking work experience. They often speak little or no English, and there have been claims that some fail to keep their clients informed of their rights or of developments in the case. For this reason knowing as much about your rights, and about the legal procedures of Thailand, is all-important.

Categories of Charges

(i) Minor offences

Minor offences are usually tried within six to eight weeks from the time of arrest. Very minor offences (such as visa overstay or working without a permit) go to court in about 48 hours, and you will be held in a police station, not a prison. If you receive a fine and you cannot pay, you will be kept in custody until it has been 'paid off', or you may lodge an appeal within one month of sentence being passed.

If you can pay, or you are given a suspended sentence, you will be taken from the court to an Immigration Detention Centre to await deportation. If you don't already

have an airline ticket, it is essential that you buy one as soon as possible. If you have no money, the Foreign Office can assist your family or friends to transfer funds to Thailand for you to purchase a ticket. (Alternative arrangements may be made on a case-by-case basis).

(ii) Serious offences

If the charge is a serious one, you could be held in prison for up to 84 days (pending investigation) before your trial commences. It is difficult to estimate how long your trial will last as it depends upon the particular facts of each case: your plea, the number of witnesses called on each side, and the discretion of the court. Major narcotics trials where a defendant pleads 'not guilty', for example, can last up to three years.

(iii) Narcotics charges

Among the most serious charges – which carry the most severe penalties – are those for narcotics offences. When convictions for narcotics offences are obtained, Thai police officers have been known to receive up to 25% of the local value of the drugs seized, while informers receive a 30 to 75% reward. As local street values are low compared to the developed world, it is rumoured that foreign police agencies supplement local rewards, thus giving the Thai police an extra incentive to make seizures and obtain convictions.

The 1979 Thai Narcotics Act classifies drugs into five major categories, as follows

1. Hard narcotics (heroin, ecstasy and amphetamines).
2. General narcotics (morphine, cocaine, opium and codeine).
3. Medicines that contain ingredients of narcotics in category 2.
4. Chemicals used for producing narcotics in categories 1 and 2, such as acetic anhydride, acetyl chloride.
5. Other drugs not included in the first three categories, like marijuana and kratom plants.

Penalties vary according to the type of drugs, the quantity seized, and the nature of the offence. What you consider a small quantity may well be classified as trafficking. For example, 15 tablets of *yabaa* carries a trafficking charge.

The crimes that carry the most severe penalties are for producing, importing or exporting more than 100 grams of drugs in category one. On conviction you can be given life imprisonment or the death penalty, although the latter may be commuted to

life – which in Thailand means 50 years. If a death sentence is reduced, whether by the scale or type of punishment, it is reduced as follows:

- if the reduction is by a third, the death penalty is reduced to life imprisonment
- if the reduction is by a half, the death penalty shall be reduced to life imprisonment or imprisonment for 25-50 years
- if a life sentence is reduced, whether it is a reduction in the scale of punishment or punishment to be inflicted, the sentence will be reduced to 50 years imprisonment.

You will also face life imprisonment if convicted of

- possession or 'disposal' (i.e. dealing) of drugs in category one
- producing, importing or exporting of drugs in category two
- possession or dealing more than 100 grams of drugs in category two
- simple possession of more than 100 grams of drugs in category two.

(Note that a conviction for either of the latter two can result in anything from five years to life imprisonment).

What happens at the trial?

Although you will be taken to remand hearings in the prison 'uniform' of brown overalls, when it comes to the full trial you have the right to wear your own clothes. Your lawyer must apply to the court for permission, and you will be expected to carry your clothes from the prison to the court and change there. Casual clothes are not allowed. For men a suit, or at least a shirt and tie, for women a long skirt or dress.

Interpreters and translators

Trials are held in Thai and few judges speak or understand English. The Criminal Procedure Code of Thailand was recently amended to grant an accused person the right to a state-funded interpreter, if needed. So if you do not speak or understand Thai an interpreter should be provided, although in practice it does not always happen. Court interpreters must affirm that they will not add to or suppress anything given in evidence, and they must also sign the translation of proceedings.

All trial documents are written in Thai. Prisoners Abroad may be able to help with organising translations. If you are considering paying for a translation, note that lawyers tend to charge more than professional translators.

Your plea

Your trial will normally commence within 28 days of your being charged and will consist of a series of monthly hearings. The length of both the trial and sentencing stages of the process depends upon your plea.

If you plead 'guilty' to a minor charge it is likely that your trial will be concluded in a matter of months. A 'guilty' plea can also influence your sentence. For example, pleading 'guilty' to charges of credit card or cheque fraud could result in your sentence being reduced by half. It is also important to note that all offences are dealt with separately, so the fraudulent use of a credit card on five different occasions would carry a maximum sentence of two years for each offence – ten years' imprisonment in total. A plea of 'guilty' to every such charge could reduce your sentence to five years. This is by no means certain and depends entirely upon the discretion of each judge.

A 'not guilty' plea means that both the prosecution and defence will have to introduce full evidence to the court. It is not uncommon for single hearings to be spread weeks apart and a trial may drag on for more than three years before a sentence is handed down. If you have a co-defendant, it can stretch to five years.

Even if you are found not guilty, you may not be in the clear. The prosecution has 45 days to lodge an appeal against the verdict, during which time you will normally be held in prison. This means another trial that may well end in your conviction.

Preliminary examination

There may or may not be a preliminary examination before your trial, it is completely at the discretion of the court. The purpose of such an examination is to help the court decide whether or not there's a *prima facie*, or clearly grounded, case against you. If there is, the order of the court is final, and a trial will follow. However, if it decides that there isn't a clearly grounded case against you and advocates dropping the charges, the Public Prosecutor may appeal this decision to a higher court.

Court procedure

The criminal courts have three tiers: First Instance (trial), Appeal and Supreme. Trials must be held in open court (open to the general public) unless the interests of public order, good morals or the security of the state warrant the trial being held in a closed courtroom.

In some respects the procedure followed in the trial court is similar to the British system. The charges are read out and explained to the accused person, who then is asked to make a formal plea ('guilty' or 'not guilty'). Their statement is written down for the record. The prosecution presents its case first, followed by submissions on the part of the defence. Both sides have the right to cross-examine the other's witnesses. After the prosecution and defence have both presented all their witnesses and evidence, they have the opportunity to sum up their case. It is possible to make an application to the court asking that you be allowed to close your case personally (i.e. present the court with your spoken testimony). The courts are usually reluctant to grant this. Judgment can take anything from a few days to several weeks from the end of the trial.

In almost all cases, you will want to be present at your trial during the presentation of the evidence. You are not required to be present if you are represented by a lawyer and your crime carries either a maximum sentence of less than ten years imprisonment, or is punishable only with a fine. However, you must always have the permission of the court to not attend.

It is possible that there will be no trial whatsoever if you have pleaded guilty to the charge(s). If you are facing less than five years' imprisonment, the court can give judgment against you without taking any further evidence. In cases where the sentence is five years or more, the court is required to hear evidence from the prosecution until it is satisfied that you are guilty.

There are two major differences from British court procedure. Firstly, in Thailand there are no juries. Judges preside over every trial. Secondly, the practice of a clerk/court reporter recording the hearing word for word does not occur in Thailand. Instead, the judge records an abridged version of the testimonies and evidence after each witness has been heard. This is typed up by the clerk during the hearing, and presented to the witness for signature at the conclusion of his testimony. This results in points of evidence being missed or left out. Furthermore, evidence not presented at the first trial cannot be raised or addressed in Appeal or Supreme Court hearings.

The prosecution's witness statements are all-important. Make sure your lawyer asks for copies of their testimony and/or out-of-court statements. When the prosecution's witness has given verbal testimony, your lawyer can ask for a 'continuation date' for his cross-examination. This is your best chance to undermine the case against you. If the witness is lying, they may well have forgotten details by the time they come back

to court and your lawyer can challenge them on differences between their verbal and written statements.

Keep in mind also that if you are calling any witnesses for your case, your lawyer should not publicize their names and addresses before they come to court. Intimidation of witnesses can occur.

Evidence

Any material (physical), documentary (written) or oral (spoken) evidence likely to prove the guilt or innocence of the accused is admissible at trial, provided that it was not obtained through any promise, threat, deception or other unlawful means. In practice, statements or material that would not be allowed in a British court (such as hearsay or secondary documents which do not relate to the charge) are admissible as evidence in Thailand. Other points to note are that

- you should be given the benefit of the doubt, if there is any, as to whether or not you committed the offence
- you have the right not to incriminate yourself
- you may not be cited as a witness for the prosecution.

If you have no convictions in Britain and are not wanted for any crime, you could consider asking the Embassy to provide a statement stating this, and entering it as proof of your good character. You will have to give the Embassy enough time to check up on your record and also allow time to get the document translated into Thai (for which you will have to pay).

After conviction

If you receive a guilty verdict in the First court there are still options open to you, beginning with an appeal.

Appeals

Appeals can be made on questions of fact or law. A case may be reviewed, even after final judgment has been given, if fresh evidence comes to light. However, appeals on questions of fact are not allowed if the offence carries a maximum sentence of three years or less, or a fine not exceeding Baht 60,000, or both.

You must lodge an appeal within one month of judgment, although a further 30 days is almost always granted. Normal procedure is to apply for the extension as soon as

possible after your sentence. You then have to wait up to a year for the appeal to be heard. Legal aid (i.e. court-appointed lawyers) is not available for appeals to the Appeal or Supreme Courts.

The Appeal Court only accepts written submissions and is known locally as “the money court”. Your lawyer may suggest that you pay money through him in an attempt to overturn your conviction via financial measures. However, this will likely lead to further payments, with the strong probability of no positive outcome. The fact is that no honest lawyer would involve himself in such practices.

If your appeal to the Court of Appeal fails, you may then appeal against its judgment to the Supreme Court.

Parole

Parole is the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections and not the court. The rules and regulations make it extremely difficult for a foreigner to be given parole.

Remission and amnesty

Department of Correction rules allow time off for good behaviour (remission). If you have had discipline problems, or have been convicted of a serious narcotics offence, a reduction of sentence is less likely. Your prisoner classification can make a difference to how much time off you may be granted. There are no guarantees, but generally the higher your class, the better your chances of remission.

Classification begins as soon as your sentence is confirmed – time passed in prison on remand and during your trial is not counted, nor is time spent waiting for an appeal to be heard. Recent reports suggest it is reviewed every six months, and a good discipline record should mean your class will be improved. More information on how the system works, and how to improve your classification, can be found in the **‘Prison system and prison conditions’** chapter.

Royal amnesties are occasionally given to celebrate occasions such as the King’s birthday. Who will benefit from an amnesty and by how much cannot be predicted. Those with drug convictions are less likely to be granted amnesty.

The King’s Pardon

This is also known as a Royal Pardon or a Petition for Executive Clemency. Pardons are generally only granted to those who have strong medical grounds (such as having HIV/Aids or a terminal illness), although your chance of success will improve if you have the support of the Embassy. Do not believe anyone who says they can help you succeed by making a payment.

The Petition

The Petition process is mandated under Sections 259 to 267 of the Criminal Procedure Code relating to Pardon, Commutation and Reduction of Punishment; under Section 34 of the Penitentiary Act, 1936; and under Items 120 to 126 of the Ministerial Regulation of the Ministry of Interior.

Petitions can only be made at two-yearly intervals. The first Petition should be presented between six and 60 months from confirmation of your sentence – the exact timing will depend on your circumstances. A good deal of paperwork is involved, so it is advisable to have a Thai lawyer who can deal with it all and follow up the application with the Department of Corrections. If you don't have legal representation you should contact the Embassy for advice.

Your application can be supported with letters from family members, friends, employers, and any professionals you can call on (for example, a doctor). If appropriate, you may also request support from Prisoners Abroad.

A petition can be completed in three ways:

- signed by yourself (you can prepare the Petition inside prison, or a member of your family or your lawyer can do it and then deliver it to you for your signature)
- signed by a member of your family (but only in cases where you are not currently in prison)
- signed by yourself with a request to maintain the confidentiality of the contents, as per item 125 of the Ministerial Regulations.

What else do I need?

All the documents must be translated into Royal Thai (Royal Thai is Thai language that uses various honorific and specialized vocabulary when addressing the Royal Household or its members), certified, and addressed to His Majesty the King.

You should include in the Petition

- a statement giving some background to your life and indicating how you became involved in the criminal activities which led to your conviction
- copies of the verdicts of every case from each court involved, certified by the Chief Clerk of each court. To obtain these, you will need to make formal requests to the courts concerned, quoting the appropriate case numbers. (If you don't know them you can get hold of the information through a prison official. There is a

fee payable to the court for this service)

- a guarantee from the Embassy that your repatriation costs can be met. This means that money for your airfare home has to be lodged with the Embassy in advance
- letters of reference and support from family, friends, employers, family doctor, teacher etc.
- medical reports, if a medical condition is one of the reasons for seeking a pardon, from an independent doctor in Thailand. This can be supported by your own GP in the UK if necessary.

If you are in prison, you must hand the Petition to the chief jailer or Governor of the jail, who will then forward it to the State Counsellor in charge of the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Interior will consider each Petition and make a recommendation as to whether or not a Pardon should be granted. Finally, your Petition goes to the offices of the Royal Palace for the consideration of the Privy Council. The prisoner will normally be notified of the outcome through a prison official. **It can take up to three years** before a decision is reached. If the Petition is rejected, you must wait at least two years before trying again.

Support from the Foreign Office

The Foreign Office (FCO) will consider supporting an application for a Pardon if

- you are under 18 years of age
- you, or a close family member, is suffering from a serious or terminal illness
- your life or health is at serious risk if you remain in prison
- the death of a partner will leave young children with no-one to care for them
- you can provide strong evidence that a miscarriage of justice has occurred, or justice has been denied, and all attempts to put this right have failed (although in such cases, the FCO would not state this as the reason for supporting your application).

If you want to request Foreign Office support, you should write to either the local Consul, or to the Desk Officer for Thailand at The Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. Alternatively, you could write to Prisoners Abroad and ask them to pass your letter on.

Transfer back to the UK

A Bilateral Transfer Treaty was agreed to by Thailand in 1990 and agreed for implementation by Britain in 1991. The Treaty allows for prisoners who qualify to complete their sentences in the UK. Generally you must have served four years or one-third of your sentence, whichever is the shorter, before you qualify. (Bear in mind that the process of approving a transfer takes a year to 18 months).

If the court gave you a life sentence, regardless of whether it was later reduced by a Royal amnesty, the minimum qualifying period is eight years, and the UK is bound by the terms of the treaty to enforce the Thai sentence. In other words, your sentence will not be reduced when you reach Britain, unless you are granted an amnesty or a King's Pardon from Thailand. (You are still entitled to appeal for clemency, and to benefit from amnesties, after returning to the UK). Non-lifers are treated in the same way as prisoners sentenced in the UK and are eligible for release on parole after serving half their sentences. For more specific information about this process, please see our separate factsheet on prisoner transfer.

Please note that in the following circumstances, you are not entitled to a transfer

- if you have committed an offence against Royalty, or the internal or external security of Thailand, or an offence against the laws governing national art treasures
- if you have outstanding payments of fines, restitution of damage or compensation of damages arising from your conviction
- if you have less than one year left to serve.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office continues to press the Thai authorities for a change in their transfer eligibility rules. This will require the passing of an Act of Parliament in Thailand, so may still be some time away.

A-Z of legal terms

Bail

Once charged with an offence you may be released on bail, rather than held in custody until your trial. 'Bail' is only granted when you agree to attend the trial, and usually the police or court must also be satisfied that you will really do so. Conditions may be made, for example you might be

- ordered to stay within a certain area
- required to report to a police station at stated intervals
- asked to give some form of security to the court, such as handing over your passport, or paying in an amount of money to guarantee that you will attend court for the trial. If you fail to do so, you lose the money.

If you break the conditions of your bail you could find it withdrawn, and may well be taken into custody.

Code Napoleon

The Code Napoleon relates to civil law. French law (and countries where the system of law is based on the French model) has been 'codified', which means they have codes of written laws ('statutes') made by government. The Criminal Code and the New Code of Criminal Procedure, both dating from 1992, form the basis of criminal law as applied by the courts in France.

Common Law

The English legal system, and that of certain other countries, has not been codified or written down as a set of statutes. Instead, law is based both on statutes such as Acts of Parliament and the decisions of courts in earlier cases ('case-law' or 'common law'). The common law has built up over centuries. Both relevant common law and statute law have to be taken into account by the courts when passing judgment on any case.

Deportation/ Expulsion

Both words refer to a process whereby a person is legally obliged to leave a country. This often happens when a British person is released from prison in a foreign country, and it was part of the penalty handed down by the court.

A deportation or expulsion order is usually in the form of a document. It may set out further conditions, for example a deadline by which you must leave the country,

and/or a time-period during which the order remains 'live' and you will not be allowed to return. Orders may result in forced removal, where you will be physically restrained before being sent out of the country. Commonly this means being taken directly from prison to the airport and placed in an Immigration Detention Centre to await deportation.

Instructional / Investigative stage

These terms generally refer to the time before the trial, when the prosecution is preparing its case and the defendant is preparing the defence. The court may be involved in decisions regarding remand, custody or bail, or access to witnesses and evidence. In some countries the case will be brought first of all before a lower court to assess whether it should be sent to a higher court for trial.

Jurisdiction

This refers to the power of a court to hear certain types of case, or to impose a certain type of sentence. Under most legal systems there is a division of courts into lower ones, which hear trials of less serious offences, and the higher courts which try more serious cases and hear appeals from lower courts.

Pardon / Clemency / Amnesty

These terms refer to processes outside the legal system where a convicted person can be pardoned for a crime of which they have been convicted. If you are pardoned, or granted amnesty or clemency, your sentence will be withdrawn, and you will be released from custody.

The decision to grant a pardon is usually made by the head of state (e.g. the King) not a judge, and generally depends on political and/or humanitarian factors. An application or 'petition' for pardon/clemency or amnesty has to be made by, or on behalf of, the prisoner. Support from diplomatic, political or international bodies or individuals will increase the chance of success.

The Prosecution

Once a person has been charged with a crime the State must bring a criminal case against them in a court of law before they can be found guilty or not guilty. The State is usually represented by Prosecutors, and the evidence and arguments that they put before the court is called 'the Prosecution case'. The 'defendant' or 'accused', must present evidence or arguments to challenge and disprove the prosecution's case. This can be done either through a defence lawyer or by leading your own defence.

Remand

The remand period is the time between arrest and the start of the trial. During this period you may be 'remanded' in custody or released on bail. The decision to hold someone in custody is usually made by a court. The custody period should be fixed, or at least reviewed regularly. An 'indefinite period of detention' before trial (i.e. locking someone up with no trial date set) amounts to an infringement of human rights.

Remission and Parole

'Remission' means a reduction of your sentence, usually for good behaviour, resulting in early release without conditions. It normally happens through an administrative procedure, sometimes written into law.

'Parole' is also an administrative practice, by which a prisoner is released early, before completing their sentence. Good behaviour is taken into account, and you must also convince the authorities that you accept you did wrong. If you are granted parole the sentence still stands and conditions will be placed upon you. If you break them you will be arrested and could be returned to jail. Different rules apply in different countries, and the rules also vary depending on the type of crime and length of sentence. Your chance of being paroled is less if you are not normally resident in a country.

Repatriation

This is not a legal term as such, but generally refers to the process of sending a person back to their country of origin or birth. It happens, for instance, when a prisoner transfer has been agreed (to finish the jail term in a UK prison) or when someone is forcibly deported back to the country of their nationality.

Summary Offences / Indictable Offences

This refers to the way in which crimes are put into different categories according to the level of seriousness, and are dealt with by different courts.

Some minor offences, known as 'summary offences', can be brought to trial before a lower court which can hand down only a limited type of sentence. Other categories of more serious crimes, known as 'triable either way' offences, may be sent for trial to either a lower or higher court, while the most serious crimes ('indictable offences') are always brought to trial at a higher court. Murder, rape, robbery and certain drug offences fall into this category.

Most countries have some method to distinguish minor crimes from the more serious ones, with different court procedures for the different categories. But it is important to realise that the categories can differ from country to country, and what might be a minor drug charge in the UK can be a serious offence in another country. Possession of even a small amount of an illegal drug may carry heavy penalties, and anything over a few grams can be technically trafficking.

Transfer

Various nations have entered into agreements with each other, by which they agree to send prisoners back to their 'home countries' once they have served a minimum period in the country where they were convicted. Generally the idea is that they will serve out the rest of the sentence at home – for Britons, the UK. However, conditions regarding emission of sentence after transfer vary from country to country, plus the type of crime and/or sentence may well affect transfer arrangements.

Warrant

A warrant is a written legal order, usually issued by a court official, a magistrate or a senior police officer. A warrant authorises the police to do certain things such as

- search premises
- take things found during the search to be used as evidence
- arrest or otherwise detain a person suspected of a crime.

Without Prejudice

This technical term refers to discussions, negotiations or offers of settlements which are made 'off the record' between the prosecution and defendant. The discussions are given a special status, which means that they cannot be

- brought as evidence in court, or
- referred to if the negotiations break down, and the matter proceeds to trial.

Both sides must agree right from the beginning for 'without prejudice' status to apply to any specific negotiations or discussions.

Some Latin phrases used in law

- *Audi Alteram Partem* is a rule of natural justice, which requires that both sides (the prosecution and the defence) must be given the opportunity to put their case before the court. It literally means 'hear the other side'.

- *Ex Parte*: some matters are brought before a court by way of an application made by one side without notice to the other. This 'one-sided' type of application is often used in cases of emergency, where there is no time to first notify the other side or when notifying them would be harmful. (For example, if warning them would defeat the object of the application).
- *Habeas Corpus* is a writ ordering a person to be brought before a court or judge, notably to determine whether their detention is lawful. In modern law it is associated with being 'innocent until proven guilty' and can be invoked to stop someone being locked up without charge for an indefinite period.
- *In Flagrante Delicto* is to be caught red-handed committing any crime.
- *Locus Standi* is the legal right (or 'standing') to take part in a court proceeding. A person who has been charged with an offence has a legal right to appear in court to defend him/herself, and a properly qualified lawyer would have the legal right to appear on his/her behalf if instructed to do so. Third parties who are interested in the outcome of the case, even the victims of the crime, do not usually have the right to take part in the court proceeding (except as witnesses, if they are called, and then it is an obligation, not a right).
- *Prima Facie* means 'at first sight' or 'on the face of it', and is used to describe the initial assessment of evidence against a person charged with an offence. If there is not sufficient evidence '*prima facie*' then the charge should be dropped, and a court may make such an order.
- *Pro bono (publico)* literally means 'for the public good', and is often used to describe a lawyer taking on a case without financial compensation.
- *Ultra Vires*: the police, the courts and any official can only act within the boundaries of their legal power. Actions beyond the scope of their powers are invalid, and are said to be '*ultra vires*' - 'outside the power'.

The prison system and prison conditions

In this chapter you will find information on daily life in prison in Thailand. What happens during remand, trial and sentencing can be found in the earlier chapter on the Criminal Justice system. While most of the information here is correct, each case is handled on an individual basis, so you may find things do not happen exactly as described.

After sentence

Once you have been sentenced, the prison you are sent to depends upon the length of your sentence and whether you are male or female.

Bangkok Special is for male prisoners serving sentences of up to three years for non-drug offences. Klong Prem is for men serving up to thirty years, Bang Kwang for more than thirty years. Most women are held in the Klong Prem Women's Correctional Institution. All these prisons are in the Lard Yao complex in Bangkok, except Bang Kwang, which is just outside the city.

If you are being held in a prison outside Bangkok you should contact the British Consul. Provided you are not awaiting appeal they can advise on applying for transfer to a prison where conditions are better and visiting easier.

Arriving at prison

On arrival you will be stripped and searched, which may involve a full body search. Your hair will be searched and men's hair is often cut short. Long trousers are cut off to make shorts, and sandals are the only footwear allowed. Neckchains, watches and gold jewellery are not permitted. You should ask for a receipt for any items taken from you, as they are placed in storage. Lockers are available, and you are advised to buy a padlock from outside the prison. Male prisoners are likely to be held in leg irons for at least a month, and some prisoners have reported much longer. Women are not chained. Throughout your sentence you can expect to be searched at random.

Prison rules

Prison rules are set down in the Correction Department Act, 1936, and the Criminal Procedure Code. Officially, every effort is made to comply with the provisions of the Minimum Standards of Treatment of Prisoners, as set out by the United Nations.

Classification of prisoners

Classification begins as soon as your sentence is confirmed. Time passed in prison on remand and during your trial is not counted, nor is time spent waiting for an appeal to be heard. There are six classes of prisoner: Very Bad, Bad, Standard, Good, Very Good and Excellent. Each prisoner starts on Standard. Your classification will not affect your everyday life, but can make a difference to remission (time off your sentence). There are no guarantees, but generally the higher your class the better your chances of remission.

Department of Correction rules allow time off for good behaviour. If you have had discipline problems, or have been convicted of a serious narcotics offence, a reduction of sentence is less likely. Likewise, your discipline record will influence whether you are granted 'contact' visits and how many. Recent reports suggest classification is reviewed every six months, and a good discipline record should mean your class will improve.

Other things that can help are being able to sing the national anthem in Thai, and demonstrating basic knowledge of Buddhism, such as prayers and meditation. Guards 'teach' these subjects to prisoners, almost always in Thai.

General prison conditions

As in all countries, these vary from one prison to another. As well as getting used to poor living conditions, you will have to learn to put up with boredom, bad food and lack of contact with the outside world.

All prisons are overcrowded and prisoners are locked in their cells from late afternoon to early morning. 'Cells' are often large dormitories, cleaned once a week by the prisoners themselves. Better-off prisoners pay poorer ones to clean for them. You are expected to pay for a sleeping place, even on the floor. Foreigners are sometimes allowed to share cells, and for ten hours a day you are able to mix with other prisoners, wear your own clothes (shirt and shorts) and wash or shower daily. Hot water must be bought from the guards, otherwise all you get is cold water from a communal trough or tank.

Physical violence from the guards towards British prisoners is very rare, although some have experienced verbal threats and insults, and there may be racial prejudice towards black prisoners. There can be aggression between prisoners, due to the usual prison 'pecking order', and sometimes the 'trusties' (or 'blue shirts') can be

physical. The best way to avoid this is to learn some of the language and to be sociable.

The food ration does not provide enough nourishment or vitamins, but you can buy food at most prison shops. In some prisons you can even cook your own meals. It is accepted that prisoners must have some source of financial assistance to maintain basic health. You will have to pay for all your everyday needs – extra food, blankets, clothes, eating bowl and spoon, plus medicines other than aspirin and antibiotics. If you have no money and no other source of support, Prisoners Abroad can make sure you have enough to live off by giving a regular grant for the purchase of food and other essentials. For further information, contact the British Consul or the caseworker for Thailand at Prisoners Abroad.

Drugs

The majority of prisoners are drug offenders and the availability of drugs in most prisons means the temptation to take them is very real. Punishment can be severe if you are caught using, holding or dealing them. A period of solitary confinement is usual and you can expect to face additional charges – which can mean additional time on your sentence. The other penalty is the risk of serious infection. Both hepatitis and HIV are on the increase due to people sharing needles. HIV testing can be applied for via the Consul. If you want a test you can discuss the options in confidence with a member of the consular staff.

Drugs are less common in the women's prison and in Narcotics Remand, the strictest prison, there are none at all.

Health and hygiene

Some prisoners suffer health and dental problems due to the combination of poor diet, humid weather and bad sanitation. Such conditions, combined with overcrowding, help the spread of stomach illnesses, hepatitis, TB, and AIDS-related infections. Skin infections can be a problem, especially in the wet season, and some people develop sores. After washing you should always towel yourself dry. Never share your towel, comb or clothes. If you can afford to buy your own overalls (those used for court appearances and visiting) you are advised to do so. Infections from cuts to the feet are common, so try and wear sandals.

It is possible to see a doctor, but much of the routine medical care is carried out by appointed prisoners, so first you must see one of them. When you do get to see a doctor you will often have to tell him what to prescribe. It is unlikely that you would be

allowed an appointment with a doctor outside the prison, except in an extreme emergency. If you feel it is really essential you will need to get the agreement of the prison doctor and ask the Consul if they will support your application.

Free treatment is limited to aspirin and sometimes antibiotics. You have to pay for any other medicines and all dental treatment, except extraction. Thai herbal remedies can be bought in the prison shop, but ordering prescription medicine from outside the prison can mean a delay before you receive it. If it is urgent you should make this clear, and let the Consul know too. Medicines can be bought outside and brought to the prison hospital, but they must be handed to an official along with the prescription.

Menstruation and gynaecology is not considered a medical matter by the prison authorities, but liaison between British and US Embassy staff has meant women prisoners have been allowed to see the American doctor when he visits. Tampons and pads are on sale in the prison shop. These are often not disposed of quickly enough, leading to extra hygiene problems in the women's jail.

Another problem can be mental health. Some people find it difficult to cope with their long sentences and can suffer stress or depression. Later in this guide, along with tips for reducing the risk of infection and keeping fit, you will find suggestions for improving your mental well-being.

You should bear in mind that the British Embassy operates a medical fund for prisoners with limited financial support. They can't pay for everything, but do approach the Consul if you need medicine. Prisoners Abroad also has a medical fund, along with a vitamin programme to which the Foreign Office contributes. This enables the Embassy to buy multi-vitamins for distribution to British nationals.

Food and drink

Prison food is meagre and often described as "inedible". A typical meal, provided once or twice a day, will be rice served with vegetable soup or fish-head soup. No special dietary needs are catered for, and extra food and fluids are essential to maintain basic health. Drinking water comes from a tank, filled with mains water. Bottled water is sometimes sold in the prison 'coffee shop', where you can also buy prepared Thai dishes and basic foodstuffs.

In the men's prisons most foreigners form 'food groups', pooling their money to buy food and pay for shared use of a cooking hut. The shops sell stoves and charcoal for cooking; oil, spices and dry goods, plus fresh produce can be ordered from outside suppliers. In the women's prison you can only cook for yourself in the most limited

way – you can buy noodles and raw vegetables and soak them in hot water – for which you will also have to pay. (Note that prisons outside Bangkok are less likely to sell fresh or dry food, bottled water, or cooking equipment).

Mail and money

There are no restrictions on how many letters prisoners can receive. In the men's prisons there also is no limit to the number they can send, while women prisoners are restricted to three per week. Your mail will be looked at, and possibly censored, by the prison authorities – although many of them cannot read English. What this means in practice is delay, both for mail coming in and going out. You are advised not to write anything critical about the prison or your living conditions, particularly at first, as this will result in your letters being censored. Any official-looking material, such as forms, will probably be treated with suspicion. You can have post sent via the British Embassy, but the prison authorities expect the consular staff to check the contents. If people are writing to you at the prison, tell them to be certain to include your building number in the address.

You can receive magazines and books but not newspapers. All packages are likely to be opened and their contents inspected in front of you. You should check the rules of your prison before anyone sends you anything. (More information on mail and visits can be found in Part 3 of this Guide).

The authorities have now installed public telephones in Klong Prem for prisoners to make (but not receive) calls. However, there have been reports that no foreign prisoners have had use of them, even for local calls.

Money is essential in Thai prisons. Carrying cash is usually forbidden, but money sent out to you via the Foreign Office can be kept in an account at the Embassy or at the prison itself. (Some prisoners have advised that having both is best). Prisons issue coupons or account cards, so that you can buy what you need from the prison shop. There is a daily spending limit in the shop, and the goods are over-priced, but you can spend more on ordering cheaper food from outside. If you have no resources of your own, Prisoners Abroad can make a grant to pay for essentials.

Some prisoners have commented that there are alternatives to cash. Cigarettes and *tam jai* (powdered aspirin) are both on sale in the prison shops and you can use them to buy services or trade for hard-to-get items.

Visits

A representative from the British Embassy makes a monthly visit to prisons in Bangkok; once every three months outside the capital. They may be able to put you in touch with one of the volunteer prison visitors living in Thailand. English-speaking Baptist ministers and Catholic missionaries also visit.

With regard to family and friends, it is advisable to give them as much information as you can about

- what to expect on arrival in Thailand
- what happens when they reach the prison
- everything you know about visiting regulations.

Remember, the noise, traffic and pollution of Bangkok, (added to the experience of seeing you behind bars) is likely to prove distressing, especially for first-time visitors. It will help to make their journey less stressful if you find out a few things beforehand. For example:

- should they arrange the visit through the Embassy?
- how long in advance should they contact the Embassy?
- what bureaucratic procedures can they expect?
- do they need to give advance notice of a visit to the prison authorities?
- can extra visits be arranged?

It's always wise for visitors to check with consular staff about current visiting conditions, so it's a good idea to

- pass on the name of the consular staff member you have most contact with
- find out if this is the best person to inform of their intended visiting dates
- check that visiting days and times have not changed, as this can happen with no warning
- find out how long ordinary visits last, and if 'contact' visits are permitted? If so, when and for how long?
- let them know what can they bring in for you
- check if non-relatives and children can visit too.

Work

The only work that is available is menial and very poorly paid. In the men's prisons foreigners tend not to work, while in the women's prison it is more usual, as it is seen as a way of making friends, learning the language and earning a little money. Work

may be making clothes or assembling plastic toys in cramped workshops, or duties in the hospital, kitchen or laundry. If you are assigned a job and don't want to do it you will be expected to pay a Thai prisoner to work for you. In general, Thai prisons are kept running by inmates doing most of the work, from cleaning and cooking through to the 'trusties' who run the stores, maintain registers, and search newcomers for contraband.

Leisure and education

There is limited provision for recreational activities in prisons in Thailand. What few diversions you may find are unofficial and organised and paid for by the prisoners themselves, so they vary from jail to jail. Rules as to what is permitted are subject to change without notice. One day a game or item is allowed, the next day it may be confiscated as contraband. Prisoners say that this is difficult to get used to, because the minute you think you know a rule it has changed. This also applies to visiting and it has a negative impact on prisoners' morale.

There is some opportunity for education: Thai language classes are usually available, and some Westerners hold informal classes for other prisoners. English as a Foreign Language is popular, and some prisoners teach other subjects in which they have a background, such as maths and religious studies.

Correspondence courses can be arranged with permission from the Department of Corrections. The Embassy can help with this, as permission is normally granted if the Embassy agrees to censor and deliver all study materials, so that there is no infringement of prison regulations. The study facilities will be the same as for Thai prisoners following further education courses with Sukhothai Open University. There is also the possibility of funding for educational courses through Prisoners Abroad. If you are interested, you should write for further information.

Prison libraries, when there is one at all, will probably be very basic. Prisoners Abroad can supply you with magazines and books, and consular staff take in one book per prisoner on their monthly visits.

Narcotics Remand (Bombat) is one of the less strict prisons in respect of leisure activities, although it has had a reputation for violence in the past. Prisoners can play volleyball, football, chess, cards and draughts. In theory radios and Walkmans are banned but this is not enforced. Television and videos are available at the weekends. Educational and library facilities are non-existent.

Klong Prem Central: each of the buildings has different facilities, including an outdoor badminton court and a cemented area (paid for by foreign prisoners) for playing basketball and football. The Embassy, through the welfare fund, provides equipment to both Klong Prem and Bang Kwang (see below) for inter-building competitions in tennis, football and table tennis. There is also a common room with a television, which prisoners are able to watch for a small weekly 'fee', such as a pack of cigarettes.

Bang Kwang is for prisoners with over 30-year sentences, so is possibly the most lenient. Football and basketball are permitted during the weekday lunch break and at weekends, and prisoners are allowed to watch television for a small fee.

Bangkok Special is for shorter sentences. Some of the prisoners have paid for an outdoor gym and are also allowed to jog twice a day. However, there are few other activities, with no radio or television, no educational courses and a very poor library.

The Women's Correctional Institution has no sport facilities, but there are aerobics classes and also a band room for playing musical instruments and giving concerts. Board games and cards are not permitted, nor is smoking. There is a very basic library.

The prison has a nursery for women in the late stages of pregnancy and mothers with babies up to one year old. After this age families are expected to take them, including the children of foreigners. The only alternative is for the child to go to a missionary-run home.

For further information on funding for courses, obtaining magazines or books, or if you need a grant for essential food, toiletries or medicines, please write to Prisoners Abroad.

Keeping in touch

This chapter is intended as a guide for both prisoners and their family and friends. If you have been recently jailed you will find useful information on what you can receive in a parcel, how relatives can send money, and how they should go about arranging a prison visit (including what documents they might need, and what to expect when they get to the prison). Remember that rules can change suddenly, so it's wise to keep your friends and family up-to-date with the 'dos and don'ts' of the Thai prison system.

Post, parcels and phones

There are no restrictions on how many letters prisoners can receive. Men can send as many as they like, but women prisoners are limited to sending three per week. All post is looked at, and possibly censored, by the prison authorities, although few of them can read English. This means that the longer the letter the more time it will take to reach its destination. Tell people to include your building number in the address, as this will lessen the chance of mail going astray. Letters can be sent via the British Embassy, but the prison authorities expect consular staff to check the contents of letters before they are passed on to the prisoner.

Parcels

The cost of posting a parcel to Thailand from Britain is high. Since many goods can be bought or ordered through the prison shop, it is more practical to send money (details below). The British Embassy will not accept parcels for prisoners.

Sending a parcel from within Thailand is very cheap, but it must be posted outside Bangkok itself, otherwise it will not be allowed into the prison. Parcels can be posted from Nonthaburi, which is close to Klong Prem prison and on the way to Bang Kwang. It will take about three days to arrive. It is also much more likely to reach the prisoner than by dropping a parcel off at the prison door.

Note that all packages are likely to be opened and their contents inspected in front of the prisoner.

What can be sent?

You should think about what you need – and are able to receive – before asking for anything.

Things that are difficult to get hold of in Thailand, such as magazines and books (newspapers are forbidden) can be used and exchanged with other prisoners. Other useful items are: light clothing (underwear, T-shirts and shorts), stationery and pens, and small re-sealable plastic bags, for holding shampoo etc.

Sending money

Carrying cash is forbidden, but money can be sent out to Thailand via the Foreign Office and held in accounts at the Embassy in Bangkok, or at the prison, or both.

Vouchers are issued for use in the prison shop, and extras, can be ordered from outside.

Phoning, faxing, emails

The authorities have now installed public telephones for prisoners to make (but not receive) calls in Klong Prem, but there have been reports that foreign prisoners cannot use them. It may soon be possible to send faxes and emails to Thai prisons. This is a changing situation, so please contact the consular section of the Embassy for developments.

Being visited

Bearing in mind how different Thailand is from Britain, if someone is going to visit you for the first time it is a good idea for them to read an up-to-date travel guide before they leave Britain. For people who haven't travelled much it is likely they will find Bangkok noisy, polluted and confusing. Add to this the sight of a loved one in prison, plus the conditions under which they are allowed to visit, and it can all prove an upsetting experience. Try and give family and friends as much information as you can about

- what to expect on arrival in Thailand and getting around in Bangkok
- what the prison is like, how to find it and what happens when they get there
- visiting times, what they can take in, and what visiting day is like.

They must get in touch with the Consular Section of the British Embassy. (Their address is at the end of this chapter). They can supply information about visiting days and times for particular prisons, and an information sheet on how to get there. If visitors are going out for a limited time it is essential that they inform the Embassy of their intended visiting days well in advance. Consular staff may be able to arrange extra visits, for instance on days when visiting in a particular building is not usually

allowed. To do this they must apply to the Department of Corrections for written permission. The letter authorising the visit can be taken to the prison and shown, along with passport, at visitor registration.

Remand prisoners

There are more restrictions on visiting remand prisoners than sentenced ones, and regulations and visiting times can be changed at short notice. A letter of introduction from the consular section may help to get a slightly longer visit – otherwise it can be as brief as 20 minutes.

Sentenced prisoners

Where both sentenced and remand prisoners are held in the same prison they have different visiting days. In the men's prisons visits tend to be organised by building, in the women's prison by whether they are drug or non-drug offenders.

'Contact' visits

Sentenced prisoners with no discipline problems are allowed to have occasional 'contact' visits. This means that prisoner and visitor can sit together in a designated area and physically touch. Prepared food and soft drinks can be brought in and you can have a meal together. The 'contact' visiting period lasts for a week, during which a prisoner can have up to three visits. In the past they have been available in August and December. However, in the last couple of years they have only been granted in December, for the King's birthday, so check before making any plans.

What is visiting day like?

Visitors should arrive an hour before the official visiting time begins and dress modestly (trousers for men, skirts for women, knee-length at least). Expect to be searched, and the contents of any parcel inspected. Foreign visitors register separately from locals. A form must be filled in and passport shown, along with any letter of permission. In some prisons visitors then go through a metal detector before waiting for the prisoner's name to be called out. This is when delays can happen – the wait may be minutes or up to an hour, thus reducing visiting time. You should advise visitors to bear two things in mind

- Thais do not put as much emphasis on punctuality or urgency as we do in the UK
- the prison authorities tend to be more relaxed with foreign visitors than with locals.

So, if someone feels irritated by being left hanging around, or by a guard's manner, they need to remember that this is better treatment than a Thai visitor would receive.

Prepare your visitors for what it will be like:

- generally there is no privacy, because everyone is visiting at the same time
- visits happen in an area with wire grilles on both sides of the 'no-mans land' with guards always present
- people have to shout across the gap at each other, so it can be very noisy and is always crowded.

There is a new visiting area in the foreigners' section at Klong Prem, which is a little more private – prisoners and visitors are now separated by a see-through panel.

What can visitors bring in?

Visitors shouldn't carry anything more valuable than a passport. Cameras, tape recorders and mobile phones are forbidden, so there is no point bringing them to the prison. Bags can be left in a locker or a guarded office.

If someone wants to give you personal photographs it is best to send them in a letter or parcel. They will not be allowed to hand anything across except on a 'contact' visit, and even then they must get permission in advance.

Ex-prisoners and recent visitors have recommended the following items to bring in:

- pre-cooked food and dry food like biscuits, noodles, tea, coffee, powdered milk, stock cubes, sweets, fruit and nuts
- tinned fish, fruit and condensed milk
- books, magazines, clothing and blankets
- toiletries and basic medicines: detergent, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush, comb, plasters, skin cream, multivitamins, iron tablets.

Items which are not allowed include

- tins and glass bottles or jars – the guards will open them and empty the contents into a plastic bag
- newspapers
- cash, cigarettes and anything that could be used for gambling (cards, dice etc).

There have been reports that visitors to Klong Prem should not bring anything other than cash and should buy everything in the prison shop (also note that the shop closes before the afternoon visiting session is over).

Contact information

The British Embassy

Consular Section

1031 Wireless Road

Bangkok 10330

Thailand

Tel: (00 66 2) 305 8333

Fax (00 66 2) 255 6051

Email: britemb@loxinfo.co.th

Money for prisoners should be sent to:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Desk Officer for Thailand

Consular Division

Old Admiralty Building

London SW1 2PA

Tel: 020 7270 1500

The FCO's website address is: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/> (then add in a word for what you want, for example travel/ or countryadvice/).

The Thai government also has a website with information on prisons:
<http://www.correct.go.th/eng.htm>

Health and welfare

Health issues for prisoners

This part of the health chapter will help you to identify symptoms of various illnesses, with tips on how to reduce your chances of infection and advice on basic treatment. First you can read about the most common health hazards of prison life (noting the extra problems of climate, overcrowding, and poor diet and sanitation) followed by descriptions of particular illnesses. Some are infectious (passed from person to person), others you get from contaminated food or insect bites. The information is presented so you can easily recognise the symptoms of different illnesses. Most are curable with medical help, but a few can become serious if left untreated.

Many of Prisoners Abroad's clients have found the standard of medical care in prison very low and medicines available through prison hospitals very limited. **If you fall ill you must tell the consular staff.** They may be able to arrange for you to see an outside doctor. If you know you have a medical condition (for example, you suffer from asthma or epilepsy or other fits) be sure to tell the Consul and the prison medical service about it; likewise if there is any special medicine you need. It's a good idea to let your cellmates know too, and tell them what to do if you have an attack.

The medicines suggested in the Guide are basic ones that consular staff should be able to buy for you locally. If you need an injection, ask them to buy a needle and syringe in a sterile sealed pack. If you have difficulty getting hold of particular medicine that you need, tell the Consul. You can also write to Prisoners Abroad. (Note that the **Keywords and phrases** appendix contains lots of words and short phrases to help you communicate health problems in Thai).

Basic health check

If you are feeling unwell, check your pulse rate and breathing. (It's a good idea to check them when you feel well, so you know what is normal for you).

To take your pulse, press two fingertips on the underside of your other wrist. The normal adult pulse rate ranges from 60 to 100 per minute, but around 70 is average. Your pulse rate increases by about 20 a minute for each degree centigrade (2° fahrenheit) that your temperature rises.

Now check your breathing: 12 to 20 breaths per minute is normal, increasing with fever. More than 40 shallow breaths means you need medical attention.

When you get to see a doctor, ask for your temperature to be taken. Normal body temperature is 37°C or 98.6°F. If it is more than 0.5°C (1°F) higher you have a fever.

Common ailments

Heat and dehydration

It is very important in hot climates to drink enough fluids, especially water, to prevent dehydration. A good test of whether you are drinking enough is how many times you need to pee. Four times a day is the minimum – seven is ideal. Fluids flush through your urinary tract, reducing the risk of bladder infections and kidney stones, both of which can be very painful.

Dehydration and lack of salt can lead to heat exhaustion. Tiredness with a headache, giddiness and muscle cramps, could be heat exhaustion. You should start drinking small amounts of water regularly, and either put extra salt on your food or dissolve salt and sugar in boiled water and drink it.

Heatstroke

This is more serious. Not enough fluids in extreme heat can lead to your body losing control of its 'natural thermostat'. With heatstroke, your temperature soars to 39°C (102°F) or higher with little or no sweating; headaches, flushed skin and delirium follow. Ideally you should get to a hospital for treatment, but in the short term you need to cool down rapidly. Drink fluids and put your wrists in cold water. Air circulation helps and, if possible, cover your skin with a wet towel or sheet. In general, try to avoid direct sunlight and watch out for sunburn too.

Hypothermia

In places where the temperature goes from very hot to very cold, reduced body temperature (hypothermia) can be as big a danger as heat exhaustion. It is best to wear layers of clothing, so you can take off and put on as needed, and keep your head covered when it's cold (a lot of heat is lost through the head). Symptoms of hypothermia are low energy, shivering and numbness in fingers and toes, perhaps with slurred speech, dizzy spells, cramps and sudden bursts of energy. You should put on warm, dry clothing and, if you can, take hot drinks and high-energy sugar-based foods.

Fungal and other skin infections

These are common in hot, damp climates. The areas usually affected by fungal moulds are the scalp, between the toes (athlete's foot) and fingers, or around the groin. Some are caused by ringworm – an infection passed through human contact. On the skin, ringworm shows as a clearly raised red area. Between the toes the skin is white and soggy, peeling to show redness. Wherever you get it, irritation is a key symptom. Treat it by washing regularly, air-drying the infected area, and changing your socks and underwear daily. On the skin use an anti-fungal ointment, on the feet an anti-fungal powder.

Cuts and skin irritations can easily become infected in humid air and some people develop sores. If you get a cut or sore you must keep it clean. Don't cover it, unless there is a real chance of getting dirt into it, as air will help it to dry and heal. Prickly heat rash is very common. You get tiny blisters or itchy rashes on sore, inflamed skin. Frequent washing and thorough drying helps prevent it. Treat with calamine lotion.

Bedbugs, lice and scabies

Bedbugs are bloodsuckers that live in dirty mattresses and bedding, or cracks in the wall or floor. Their bite leaves itchy bumps in neat groups. DDT is the best way of killing them. Calamine lotion or sting-relief cream soothes the itch.

Lice live in the hair on your head, clothing, or pubic hair. You catch them through human contact or by sharing infected sheets, towels, clothing or combs. They cause itching and discomfort and can be hard to get rid of. Regular combing with hair conditioner and a fine-toothed comb can help both to treat and prevent you catching them. There are also shampoos and powder treatments of varying strengths, and alcohol-based lotions. All clothing and bedding should be washed in hot, soapy water, if possible, and dried thoroughly.

Scabies is a tiny parasite caught through close body contact or from shared sheets and towels. The female burrows under the skin and lays eggs, most commonly around the wrists, fingers, genitals and feet. It causes intense heat and itching, especially at night. Scratching spreads the eggs, and so the infection. There are two treatments: Benzyl benzoate, which you rub into your entire body below the chin after a hot shower and brisk towelling, twice in 24 hours, or Quellada (Malathion) lotion, which is more effective and more pleasant to use. Clean sheets, towels and underwear are essential after treatment.

Diarrhoea and common stomach bugs

Anxiety, climate change or unfamiliar food can bring on a bout of diarrhoea, although food poisoning or water contaminated with 'faecal matter' are the usual causes. Infection can come from a variety of 'bugs': viruses, bacteria and protozoa (like amoeba and giardia). Overcrowded living conditions, with lots of people using one toilet, helps the spread.

Symptoms

It can come on either suddenly or slowly, with or without vomiting and stomach cramps, and you may pass blood or mucus. It could just be 'the runs' with stomach pains, but if it lasts for more than 48 hours, and you have a fever, you should seek medical attention.

How do I reduce my chances of getting a stomach bug?

- Hands and nails

In many countries where toilet paper is not available it is normal to use the left hand for cleaning yourself (which is why it is taboo to touch anyone or pass anything with your left hand). It makes sense never to feed yourself with your left hand and to wash both your hands thoroughly after going to the loo. Keep your fingernails short, and before touching food always clean them – even if with just a matchstick – then wash your hands, getting soap and water right under the nails.

- Food

If you are able to cook your own food, do so, and eat it as soon as it's cooked. If not, try to get tinned or pre-packed food, and fruit and vegetables that you can peel yourself. Avoid uncooked or re-heated meat or fish.

- Water

If the water supply is suspect, boil it before drinking, and buy bottled water if it is available.

Treatment

Whatever the cause of diarrhoea, the biggest danger comes from dehydration – you must replace the fluids lost. Drink small amounts of water often and eat nothing for 24 hours. If you can, buy rehydration crystals and take them in boiled water. If you can't get them, dissolve half a teaspoon of salt and eight teaspoons of sugar in a litre of boiled water. After 24 hours try eating some plain rice. Gradually build up your diet

with dry bread and bland food, drink water and weak black tea with sugar. Avoid milk and all fats and spices for at least a week.

If 48 hours have passed and the diarrhoea is still severe you could have a more serious infection. The better nourished you are, the better your system will cope with such an infection, but it is wise to seek medical attention at this stage.

Bacterial dysentery occurs all over the world. It infects the large intestine, and takes from one to seven days to show. Sure symptoms are that it comes on quickly with abdominal pains, fever, and stools of mainly blood and mucus. Other symptoms are nausea, shivers and aching limbs. It sometimes clears up by itself, but you might have to take Ciprofloxacin, a widely-available antibiotic. Take 500 mgs every 12 hours for two to three days.

Amoebic dysentery and **giardia** are both caused by parasites common in the tropics. They are spread by the 'faecal-oral route' or contamination of the drinking water supply by faeces. Both come on slowly – it can be weeks or months following infection. The first sign of amoebic dysentery is the need to pass several stools a day, eventually showing blood. Other symptoms include stomach cramps, nausea, weight loss, indigestion and anaemia, but little fever. With giardia you tend to have a bloated stomach with cramps, low energy, nausea, wind and watery, pale diarrhoea. Both infections can go away for a while, but they will flare up again later. Neither respond to antibiotics, you will need Metronidazole (Flagyl), 400 mgs, three times a day for five days, plus rest and rehydration (fluids with salt and sugar) and a bland diet. If you have severe stomach cramps these drugs may help: Loperamide (Imodium or Arret) or Diphenoxylate with Atropine (Lomotil).

Other common parasites are intestinal worms and liver flukes. The best way to avoid them is to never eat undercooked meat or raw fish. In the case of hookworm, it enters through the skin, usually the soles of feet – try not to walk around barefoot.

Serious gut infections

Typhoid fever

A serious bacterial infection, a form of salmonella, caused by contamination of food or water. (Note that there is a milder form called **paratyphoid**).

Symptoms of typhoid are high fever with slow pulse and severe headache. Constipation is common in the early stages, with diarrhoea after the first week. If

untreated, delirium sets in and pink spots appear on the body. You must see a doctor. It responds to antibiotics like Ampicillin and Ciprofloxacin (500 mgs every 12 hours for five days). If you can get milk, drink two pints (about 1,000 ml) a day, plus water and fruit juice. Eat soup and soft, bland foods, with no meat and fats, for several weeks.

Cholera

A bacterial disease that spreads quickly in overcrowded conditions with poor sanitation. The usual routes of infection are water contamination or flies landing on food. The onset is unpredictable – anything from a few hours to five days, and symptoms can be quite mild to severe within 24 hours. Cholera usually has three stages.

- For three to 12 hours, vomiting and watery diarrhoea, followed by cramps in the limbs and stomach and a strong thirst. Opposites are normal: cold skin with a high temperature, exhaustion and restlessness at the same time.
- The surface of the body starts to look bluish and wrinkled. The voice grows hoarse and the pulse weak. Mentally the person is alert, but has no energy. This phase is potentially dangerous, especially for people who were not strong beforehand.
- The body now starts to react against the illness and gradually restores itself. The pulse gets stronger, temperature lowers, skin returns to normal colour and vomiting stops. Diarrhoea can continue but less severe, eventually stopping, along with the cramps. Retaining urine for a time is quite common.

The best treatment is rest and rehydration. For the first few days drink small amounts of boiled water frequently, to replace the fluids being lost. Tetracycline can help shorten the illness, but fluid is the life-saver, especially salt and sugar solution.

Other infectious illnesses

Hepatitis

Hepatitis refers to several types of virus, known by letters, which infect the liver. All types have long incubation periods and last several weeks. Symptoms include fever, loss of appetite, headache and 'flu-like feelings. If you go on to develop jaundice, it shows as yellowing of the whites of the eyes, and later the skin, with dark-coloured urine. Other symptoms are a furry tongue, bitter taste in the mouth, slow pulse, itchy skin and constipation broken by bouts of pale diarrhoea.

Hepatitis A and **E** are found all over the world and passed on in the same way – by faecal contamination of food or water. Although you may feel very ill, both types are mild and you will recover (the only exception is that E can be dangerous for pregnant women). You will reduce your chances of infection by following the usual rules about personal hygiene, care when handling food and caution about what you eat and drink.

The best treatment for all types of hepatitis is rest, plus avoiding alcohol and fats. Try to build up your diet to include as much carbohydrate, protein and vitamins as you can, reducing the protein as the jaundice clears. Take aspirin for the headaches and use calamine lotion for itching.

Hepatitis B is very infectious and is spread in the same way as HIV – chiefly by sexual fluids or blood. Sweat and saliva also carry some risk. Few people can clear the virus from their bodies, so virtually everyone becomes a carrier, even if they are symptom-free. There are 300 million carriers, living mainly in the tropics and countries bordering the Mediterranean. Like A, virus B infects the liver, but is much more serious and can lead to lasting liver damage.

There is a combined vaccine that protects against both A and B for five years, available over the counter in some countries. The consular staff may be able to buy it for you. However, the best way to avoid catching hepatitis B is by

- not having sex without good quality condoms
- not letting a man come on your skin or in your mouth
- not sharing razors, filters, spoons, syringes or needles (either to inject drugs or for tattoos or body piercing)
- not touching another person's blood.

Note that in some prison hospitals the dental and medical equipment is not properly sterilised, and syringes and needles are re-used.

If you have hepatitis symptoms and suspect you may have caught B, talk to consular staff about having a swab taken and a blood test. Should you have B, your best option would be to apply for transfer back to the UK.

(Note that viruses C and D are caught in the same ways, although C is less infectious and is mainly acquired through injecting).

HIV/AIDS

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) can develop into Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The rate of HIV infection in Britons from having sex abroad has overtaken the infection rate of all other tropical diseases, including malaria. In prison there are added risks from injecting drugs or being treated with unsterilised equipment in the hospital. Being HIV+ means you are infected and infectious for the rest of your life, although many HIV+ people have no visible symptoms – you cannot tell by looking.

As the disease progresses, common signs are night sweats, fatigue, joint pains, tingling in the limbs and fingers and chronic diarrhoea. Women often suffer repeated gynaecological infections. You will reduce your chances of getting it by following the advice for Hepatitis B, but there is no cure. The 'combination therapy' drugs that control the disease are very expensive. If you have had a positive blood test your best chance for treatment is to get a transfer back to the UK, where the medication is available on the NHS.

Diphtheria

Diphtheria is a serious disease and still widespread in developing countries. Like TB and meningitis, it is passed on through saliva or sneezing and coughing, so overcrowded prisons with poor ventilation are ideal breeding grounds. There are different strains, from mild through to severe.

Symptoms include a sore throat, stiff neck, chills and swollen glands near the jaw, two to six days after infection. If it is a serious strain your throat will become more inflamed, possibly ulcerated, and you may experience nose bleeds and foul breath. You must get medical treatment, even if you start to feel better. Serious setbacks, including heart failure, are typical of the illness. You will need penicillin and a lot of rest afterwards.

(Most Britons have been immunised in childhood, but protection is not lifelong. If you didn't have a 'booster' before leaving Britain you should speak to the consular staff about getting one. This is also true of polio).

Tuberculosis (TB)

TB is on the rise world wide, particularly in prisons. It is a bacterial infection, caught from living closely with sufferers. Although it is associated with the lungs, it can affect any organ of the body. If you think someone in your cell has it, talk to the consular staff about being moved to another cell.

Early symptoms are loss of appetite and strength, with a nagging cough. You might bring up clear mucus or even a little blood. Weight loss, chest pains, temperature changes, night sweats, sickness and digestion problems are other signs. At this stage the disease is easily curable, but you must seek medical help.

Meningitis

Without medical treatment it can be a life-threatening disease. Again, you must seek medical help. Spread in the same way as diphtheria and TB, it results in inflammation of the membranes over the brain or spinal cord. Incubation is three to five days and symptoms include vomiting, headache, shivering, stiff neck and high temperature (up to 40°C/104°F). The body then grows tender and the limbs stiff, delirium is common and there may be red spots on the torso. After the first week, which is the most dangerous time, the disease either slowly goes or enters a chronic stage.

There is no self-help – penicillin in hospital is essential. There is a vaccine against the meningococcal strain, which is the most common strain outside Europe.

Polio

A viral infection, still widespread in developing countries. Hygiene around food and water is the key to prevention. Incubation is a week to 12 days and symptoms may come on gradually or suddenly, depending on the strain. It starts like 'flu, with aches and pains in the limbs, headache and rising temperature, leading to paralysis of the limbs with convulsions. Immediate bed rest is needed, with the affected limbs totally rested, possibly with splints. Physiotherapy will be needed later.

Diseases from insects

Malaria

A parasitic blood infection transmitted by one type of mosquito, which bites only at night. The incubation period can be anything from ten days to years, but usually symptoms will show within a couple of months.

There are four types of malaria (one potentially fatal) but all types have the same early symptoms and are often mistaken for 'flu or gastro-enteritis. Typically it starts with a headache, loss of appetite and aching muscles. Next comes sudden coldness with shivering, followed by high fever and drenching sweats. Afterwards you may feel better, but this will be temporary. If you have any of these symptoms you should seek urgent medical help. Ask the Consul to arrange for a blood test to identify the type.

To reduce your chances of getting bitten you should keep your arms and legs covered at night and, if possible, sleep under a mosquito net. Try to get hold of a repellent, but make sure it contains DEET. The most important places to use it are pulse points – wrists, elbows, ankles, throat and behind the ears. Also, mosquitoes hate smoke.

There are some 'stand-by' medicines of varying effectiveness. A combination of quinine and tetracycline is good for regions where the mosquitoes have become drug-resistant. However, a blood test will decide which medicines are best.

Dengue fever

A viral disease transmitted by a very distinctive mosquito: black with clear white markings, including white marks on the legs. Unlike the malaria mosquito, it bites mostly during the day and lives where humans live. It is increasingly common in tropical countries, especially during and after the rainy season. It breeds in clean water, often in man-made containers. Most strains are mild, though there is a more severe variation (DHF, see below).

Onset is sudden, starting with a high fever, headache, and severe body aches. The fever usually lasts for seven days, but leaves you feeling tired for a long time afterwards. Towards the end of the illness an itchy red rash often erupts on the palms and sides of the feet. Some people hallucinate and some have nose-bleeds. There is no cure, but rest and paracetamol will aid recovery. You should get a blood test to make sure it's not malaria. If it's **dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF)** the nose-bleeds will be much heavier. This strain is potentially fatal, and you must avoid aspirin and ibuprofen, as they increase the risks of bleeding.

To reduce your chances of being bitten, follow the same precautions as for malaria, and also remove or empty any containers that might collect water.

There are other, rarer, diseases caused by mosquito bites, such as Japanese Encephalitis, Filariasis and Yellow Fever. A blood test can determine if you have one of these and, if so, what treatment you will need.

Typhus

The organisms that cause it are between viruses and bacteria. The most common forms of typhus affecting prisoners are spread by lice, both human and from rats. Some types are mild, some more serious. As they all start with the same symptoms, it is essential to seek medical help.

It starts with a headache and pains in the back and limbs, followed a few days later by a sudden rise in temperature, intense headache and delirium. On the fifth or sixth day a distinctive rash appears on the body and arms – reddish spots on a dusky background. There is often a large painful sore by the bite. If untreated, by the second week there is something like a coma with delirious bouts. Four antibiotics cure typhus, including tetracycline.

Genital and bladder infections

Gonorrhoea, herpes, syphilis, chlamydia and non-specific urethritis are all on the increase in developing countries. If you develop sores or rashes around your genitals, have pain when urinating, or experience discharges of any kind, it is likely you have a **sexually transmitted disease (STD)**. However, those that affect women can be symptom-free for a long time, but can have serious consequences. Chlamydia, for example, can lead to infertility and the virus that causes genital warts has been linked to cervical cancer. Syphilis, too, often shows no symptoms in women.

If you suspect you have a STD you must get tested. Treatment is by antibiotics; there are specific ones for each infection. The best way to reduce the risk of catching or passing on an infection is by using condoms, if you can get them.

Gynaecological problems

STDs can lead to many vaginal, urinary and pelvic problems. Discharges, rashes, painful peeing and itching can all be symptoms of a STD, which you might have had for some time. If you suspect you have one, you should ask the consular staff to apply for an appointment with a gynaecologist, or at least a doctor who can take a swab for laboratory analysis.

Fungal infections

Using antibiotics for one infection can often lead to problems with another. Fungal vaginal infections ('thrush' is the most common) are often worse in hot climates.

Symptoms are itching, sometimes intense, with possibly a discharge and rash. You can self-treat with natural yogurt or by bathing with vinegar or lemon juice in the water. If it persists, Nystatin or Canestan cream and/or pessaries can help. Both are widely available over the counter. Wearing cotton pants and loose clothing is healthier than tight jeans.

Cystitis

This is caused by bacteria, useful in the gut but infectious in the bladder. A similar illness is urethritis, where the bladder becomes inflamed. Both can be sex related, but for women in prison a low fluid intake is a more likely cause, along with poor sanitation affecting personal hygiene.

The classic symptom is the feeling that you need to pee all the time but hardly anything comes out and there is intense burning with every drop. There may also be blood in your urine. You should cut out citric acid (fruit juice) and caffeine (coffee, tea and many soft drinks) and drink as much water as you can. When you pee, try and empty your bladder completely. A mixture of water and bicarbonate of soda will help restore the alkaline balance in your urine. Several antibiotics can clear it, including tetracycline and ampicillin.

There are many other urinary and pelvic infections and the symptoms can be misery. As with STDs, you should ask consular staff to try and arrange outside treatment, as they can get worse over if not properly treated.

Nutrition

Good health is linked to a nutritious diet. Ideally, we should all eat at least one 'balanced meal' per day. Below you will find information on the essential nutrients, what they are needed for and in which foods you can find them. Most foods are complex combinations of nutrients, so those mentioned more than once are the best for health and strength.

Prison food is often inadequate and even inedible. If your family can send you money, buying extra food is the top health priority. Prisoners Abroad helps clients in countries where the diet is poorest. More than 100 people receive vitamin and mineral supplements. If you feel you need them, write to your caseworker. Likewise, if you are losing weight, ask to be weighed. Any significant loss can be taken up by the consular staff as a medical matter.

Points to bear in mind:

- The recommended foods are listed in order of two things: importance to health and practical availability. This will vary around the world. In some countries it will be easier to get hold of sweet potatoes and mangoes than brown bread and peas, for instance.
- The list recognizes that in some countries it is possible to order fresh food from outside the prison, and prisoners may be allowed to cook for themselves.
- Where this is not possible, remember that tinned and packaged foods can also be nutritious. Instant mash, powdered milk, margarine and breakfast cereals often have added vitamins, and corned beef and tinned fish are good sources of protein, minerals and vitamin D.

Foods and what they do:

- Carbohydrates provide energy, act as fuel for the brain and muscles, and are vital for digestion. Without exercise, though, carbohydrates can turn into body fat.
- Fats provide energy in a more concentrated form. Excess converts into body fat.
- Proteins provide materials (amino acids) for growth and repair. They can also be converted into carbohydrate and used for energy.
- Fibre helps to reduce cholesterol levels and prevent constipation.
- Minerals are used for growth and repair and help to regulate body processes.
- Vitamins also help to regulate body processes.

Food Type	Function	Found in
Carbohydrates	Essential for energy and warmth. Too much can lead to weight gain and also, in the case of sugar, rotten teeth. A balance of sugars and starch is best.	<u>Foods high in starch:</u> Cornflakes, porridge, bread, yam, biscuits, rice, potatoes, pasta. <u>High in natural sugars:</u> honey, sultanas, dried fruit, fresh fruit, milk. <u>High in refined sugars:</u> sugar, jam, chocolate, biscuits, tinned fruit in syrup
Fats	There are three types of fats. Saturated fat is bad for the heart, so foods that are lower in saturated and higher in poly- and mono-unsaturated fats are much better for you.	Vegetable/peanut/ sunflower oils, margarine, nuts, tinned fish (tuna, sardines, mackerel).
Proteins	You must take in enough protein for the body to maintain and repair itself. Excess converts to provide warmth and energy. Prison diets are likely to contain too little protein rather than too much.	Peanuts, cheese, kidney beans/baked beans/lentils, meat, oily fish (sardines, mackerel), pasta, bread, milk.
Fibre	A balanced diet should contain some fibre, though too much can reduce the body's ability to absorb certain minerals. It comes in two forms. Soluble helps reduce cholesterol, while insoluble helps prevent constipation. Remember to increase the amount of water you drink, as this aids absorption of fibre.	Shredded wheat, porridge, kidney beans and other pulses, nuts, baked beans, bread, pasta, carrots, biscuits, raisins and cabbage.

Mineral	Function	Found in
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Calcium	For the normal function of nerves and muscles, for clotting of the blood, and for strong bones and teeth.	Powdered milk, yogurt and sultanas.
Sodium	Helps maintain the body's water balance, and is essential for muscle and nerve activity. Too little can lead to cramps, too much and you risk high blood pressure.	Soy sauce, corned beef, instant coffee, raisins, peas and margarine.
Potassium	For the correct functioning of the heart muscles. Bad diarrhoea or malnutrition can reduce the body's supply.	As above, plus bananas.
Iron	Plays a major part in the body's use of oxygen. Lack leads to anaemia.	Curry powder, cocoa, dried apricots and chocolate.

Vitamins	Function	Found in
Vitamin A	Stored in the liver. A well-nourished adult has enough to last for two years. Afterwards, if your diet lacks it, you can develop skin and eyesight problems.	Cod liver oil, carrots, sweet potato, spinach, red pepper, mango, margarine, peas.
B vitamins	Not stored in the body for very long, so you have no reserves. Just a few months without enough and you could suffer from multiple B-deficiency illnesses including: • Beriberi (inflammation of the nerves) • Sores in the corner of the mouth • Pellagra (dark, scaly skin) • Anaemia or pernicious anaemia • Damage to nerve cells	Cod liver oil, Cornflakes/fortified breakfast cereals, meat, eggs, marmite, margarine, bread, carrots, spinach, red pepper, blackeye beans, sweet potato, potatoes, bread, cheese, fish, peanuts, peas, chickpeas.
Vitamin C	Essential for healthy tissues. If you are short of C you will find wounds heal more slowly and gums may bleed. Chronic long-term shortage can lead to scurvy.	Green peppers, oranges, cabbage, fruit juices, mango, sweet potato, potatoes, plantain. (If you are able to cook your

Vitamins	Function	Found in
		own food, steam vegetables and drink the water afterwards).
Vitamin D	Needed to absorb calcium and important for the blood and bones. The best source is sunlight, so people in prison are at particular risk from vitamin D deficiency.	Cod liver oil, tinned salmon/sardines, margarine, evaporated milk, Cornflakes.
Vitamin E	Required for general health; shortages can result in anaemia.	Vegetable oils, nuts and seeds, cereals and eggs
Vitamin K	Needed for normal clotting of the blood.	Spinach, cabbage, peas and cereals.

Exercise in a small space

When people haven't been able to take everyday exercise for a while they can start to feel like they don't have any energy at all. In fact, doing exercise will increase your energy levels, and even the gentlest stretches will help keep you supple. Exercise improves your health and sense of well-being in general, and you don't need a running track or gym to do it. Even if you have limited space, this exercise programme will be of value.

Just lie down (it's good for the back!)

Lie on the floor (or on your bunk or mat, if you don't want to use the floor) with your knees bent. Keep your feet on the ground and put something firm under your head – a paperback book, for example. Your chin should neither be tucked in nor pointing upwards. Relax your back and let it straighten against the floor. Move your arms out at right angles and slowly fold them across your stomach.

Repeat this exercise while gently opening and closing your knees, keeping them bent. Try and do this exercise twice a day for ten minutes, working up to 20 minutes. It will help you relax and can also ease backache. (A variation is to lie on your back with your legs bent at the knees, and your lower legs resting on a chair or bunk). While you are doing this, close your eyes and think about exercise you did in the past – football, cycling, swimming, dancing, running, climbing etc. Imagine what your muscles did, how they moved. What happens is that your muscles 'wake up' and are reminded of what they did.

A string for your spine

- Stand or sit with your back supported. Imagine a string tied from the top of your head to the ceiling – this puts your head in the correct position on your spine. Relax your shoulders and take a few deep breaths in and out. Pause, relax and do it again. Try and remember the string when you are walking around. Your posture will improve and you should have fewer aches and pains in your back.

- Stand upright with your legs apart and hands on hips. Gently rotate the top half of your body from the waist without moving your feet. Make a circle one way, then the other. Repeat the exercise, remembering the string.

A bit more pace

- Lie on the floor with one leg bent (foot on the floor). Slowly raise the other leg, keeping it straight, as high as you can go. Use your stomach muscles to push your lower back into the floor. Slowly start to lower the leg back to the ground, stop half-way and hold it still while you count to two. Make sure your leg is straight and try to keep your hips on the ground. Now do the same with the other leg. Repeat the exercise, five times for each leg to start with. You will soon find that you can do more, and hold your leg at the halfway point for longer. Lie in the position for the first exercise to recover.
- Stand up, keeping the string in mind. March slowly on the spot, bringing each knee up at a right angle to your body. (You might want to hold on to something as you do this one).

Warming up

Warm-up exercises are a good form of exercise in their own right, and they are essential before any workout, especially before weight training. Their purpose is to raise the body's core temperature, stretch and loosen the muscles and prepare the body for further exercise. A warm-up routine will greatly reduce the chance of injuries during demanding exercise.

Before you start make sure you are warm, for example by jogging on the spot for two minutes. During the actual exercises, as shown below, movement should be fluid and easy. Avoid any jerks, muscular contractions or tightening of muscles. For maximum benefit hold the position for eight to ten seconds. This will increase your flexibility over a period of time.

Triceps

Stand upright, legs slightly apart, bring one arm up. Take the elbow with your opposite hand and pull the forearm back behind the neck and downwards. Hold this position for ten seconds, then repeat with the other arm.

Chest

Clasp hands behind your back, pushing your shoulders backwards. Extend your arms back and upward. Hold for ten seconds, keeping an upright position.

Upper back

Stand with your knees slightly bent, your feet shoulder-width apart. Clasp hands in front of you, turn the backs to face you at shoulder level, and push forward. Hold for five seconds, bring your hands slowly back towards the body and gently release. For a deeper stretch, slowly bring your chin down to your chest and bring it back up as you release your hands.

Hamstrings

Stand with your feet hip width apart and take one step forward. Bend the back leg, keeping the front leg straight. Push your hips backward, resting your hands on the bent knee. Hold this position for ten seconds. You should feel a stretch in the back of the thigh. Now change legs.

Quadriceps

With the supporting leg slightly bent, bend your other leg backward, keeping your knees together. (You might want to hold on to something for support). Grasp the ankle and pull upward and backward towards your buttocks, keeping both hips facing

forward. For a deeper stretch, slowly tip your pelvis forward, tucking your bottom in. Hold for ten seconds, then change legs.

Calves

Stand with your hands placed flat against a wall. Put one leg back, keeping it straight, with the heel down and toes pointed forward. Bend the forward leg slightly, keep the back leg straight. Lean your whole body against the wall while pressing down on the heel of the back foot and keeping your hips facing forward and level. Hold for ten seconds. If you don't feel a stretch in your calf you can stretch back further. Now change legs.

Cooling down

Cool-down exercises should be carried out after any workout, especially after weight training. They help to restore breathing to normal, prevent soreness or any long-term injuries that you might get from the workout, and stretch tightened muscles. Cool-down exercises also help to increase flexibility, as your muscles are at their warmest after a work-out. Suddenly stopping exercise or any sports activity without doing a cool-down session could lead to fainting, cramps, feeling sick, and increase the risk of aching muscles or injuries. Before you start the exercises, make sure you are still warm from your workout. To get into the cool-down positions as shown below, movement should be fluid and easy, avoid any jerks, muscular contractions or tightening. For maximum benefit keep still, holding each position for 15 to 20 seconds. End the routine with some simple deep breathing and relaxation exercises.

Quadriceps

Lie on your front. Bend one knee and grasp the ankle. Pull the ankle down towards your buttocks. Hold and repeat with the other leg.

Whole back

Get down on your hands and knees, arch your back upwards (rounding the spine) whilst breathing in. Hold for a few seconds. Lower your back while breathing out and

push down towards floor, but do not arch your back. Repeat five times.

Adductors

Sit on the floor, keep your back straight and place the soles of your feet together. Grasp your ankles, but don't pull your feet off the ground. Push your knees outwards very gently with your elbows. Hold the position as long as it's comfortable. For a deeper stretch, slowly lower your head towards your feet breathing in and hold for a few seconds, then bring your head back up breathing out.

Hips & Buttocks

With legs extended, cross your left over your right and slide the heel towards your buttocks. Place your right elbow on the outside of the left knee whilst turning your upper body the opposite way. Push the knee with your right elbow. Repeat with right over left.

Groin Stretch

From a standing position, your feet shoulder-width apart, take a big step forward. Keep your back leg straight, lift your heel off the ground and press your toes to the floor. Your front leg should be bent at the knee at 90 degrees and your foot kept flat. (Your knee should never be further forward than your toes). Press your weight down and hold for five to ten seconds, then change legs.

Hamstrings

Lie on your back with your legs bent at the knees. Lift one leg and grasp it behind the knee. Pull the knee towards your chest, keeping your other foot and hips on the ground. Hold for five seconds and repeat with the other leg.

Lower back

Sitting on your heels, stretch your body forward, keeping your buttocks on the heels. Extend your arms, stretching to the fingertips. To increase the stretch, press your elbows downwards. Hold this position for as long as is comfortable.

These exercises are only guidelines. Individuals must take full responsibility when carrying them out. Prisoners Abroad accepts no responsibility for any injuries incurred as a result of carrying out these exercises.

Likewise, the yoga exercises/postures in the section following are also only guidelines, and each individual must take full responsibility when carrying them out. Prisoners Abroad accepts no responsibility for any injuries incurred as a result of carrying out these postures and exercises.

An Introduction to Yoga

What is Yoga?

Yoga isn't just about spirituality, it's also about stretching, breathing, strength and balance. The combination of postures, breathing exercises and meditation can help you attain complete calm and physical awareness by focussing the mind and working the body at the same time. You don't need much space to do it, and no equipment, except a mat or rug.

How can yoga improve my health?

Physical health influences mental health, and vice versa, and yoga works to improve both. Muscle tone, strength, stamina and flexibility boost the immune system and stimulate self-esteem. Yoga can also help to manage and control conditions and illnesses like anxiety, stress, arthritis, asthma, back pain, blood pressure and chronic fatigue.

Getting started

If you are a beginner you will be surprised at the effect even the simplest positions can have. Remember, though, yoga is not a competition. The idea is that you work with your body, so take things easy to start with and, if positions are uncomfortable, relax your stretch a little.

The basic sitting position

Some people find sitting cross-legged uncomfortable. If you do, try putting a folded pillow or blanket under your bottom, then move your hips forward to the edge and tilt them downward. This will drop your knees towards the floor and release tension in the hips. Now place your hands lightly on your knees and relax your arms.

It is important to keep your back, neck and head in line when sitting in this position. To make sure your back is straight, imagine lifting your whole upper body and slotting it on top of your hips. Then imagine a string on top of your head, pulling your head up towards the ceiling. This will raise the chin slightly. You should feel no tension. If you do, breathing correctly will help to relax your muscles. Inhale deeply through the

nose, expanding and raising your chest. When you exhale (still through the nose) imagine all the tension rushing out of your body.

Lots of people store tension in their shoulders. If you have stiff or sore shoulders, try this exercise: push your shoulders down, away from your ears, then pull them back up towards your ears, tensing the muscles. Now let them fall gently back into a normal position.

An alternative sitting position

Kneel down with your legs slightly apart, your bottom resting on your heels and your back straight. Place your hands on each leg or in your lap, in such a way that you don't feel your shoulders being pulled down. Hands can be loosely clasped or separate. Follow the routine described above for your back, neck and head, and for loosening tension.

Your breath should be the point of concentration for both these positions. (Both are good for meditation). For 20 to 30 minutes, at the same time every day, get as straight and balanced as possible. Take a minute or two to get comfortable, then keep your body in one straight position without moving at all. It's OK if your mind is still active, as long as you keep sitting perfectly still.

Breathing exercises

Breathing is one of those things we don't think about. However, focussing on your breath and teaching yourself new ways to breathe can actually help you to deal with emotional and physical stress. It might sound odd if you haven't tried it, but it works! (When doing these exercises remember to breathe continually in and out through your nose).

Abdominal breathing

Step 1 – being aware of your breath

Lie on your back, with your knees bent and your feet on the floor, resting your hands on your stomach just below the rib cage. As you breathe in, feel your abdomen swell and rise. As you breathe out, feel your abdomen fall. Do this for a while and just feel the muscles in your stomach relax a little.

Step 2 – inflating your abdomen

Imagine your stomach is a football and you have to fill it up. Take a deep breath in, pushing out to your sides, in to your back (so it is being pushed into the floor) and pushing your stomach out to the front. Then breathe out, emptying your abdomen of air, and relax before taking your next breath in. After doing this a few times you should be feeling more relaxed and aware of your body.

Repeat steps 1 and 2, focussing on filling your abdomen, then your rib cage area, and lastly your upper chest, filling that space completely with one long breath. Now breathe slowly out.

Taking a full breath

Start by breathing into your abdomen, hold the breath, then start filling up your rib cage area and hold the breath again. Now top up with your upper chest area. When you are absolutely full of air, breathe out, long and slow, emptying yourself of all that air. Take a few full breaths and then breathe normally again. Now adopt the basic sitting position for a few minutes to wind down.

(Extracts from: Bo Lozoff, *We're All Doing Time*, Hanuman Foundation, 1985 USA & <http://www.yogasite.com/why.htm> & Prison Phoenix Trust).

Good mental health

One of the toughest things about imprisonment is boredom – long hours with nothing to do and little opportunity for exercise or recreation. Add to this the isolation of being far from home, living in cramped conditions with little privacy, and possibly a long sentence facing you. Under these circumstances it is easy to get depressed or to suffer from stress. This section of the Guide is intended to help you identify the symptoms of mental and emotional pressure, give you tips on how to cope, and suggest constructive ways in which to use your time while serving your sentence.

Coming to terms with the situation

Some people find this difficult, particularly if they believe they are not guilty of the offence, or feel the sentence is too harsh. Talking to consular staff might help – at the very least they can advise you of your rights as a prisoner and the legal procedures you must follow if you wish to appeal. Elsewhere in this booklet you can find information on applying for an appeal, a reduction in sentence, or a transfer back to the UK. And don't forget to write to your Prisoners Abroad caseworker – see the introductory chapter for how they can help.

The best favour you can do yourself is to try and make the best of things, difficult as this may seem. In the words of an ex-client of PA, "You've got to think positively, stay mentally strong and take care of yourself – no-one will do it for you. Don't dwell on the past, accept life as it is and one day you will get through all this. Just concentrate on that."

Overcoming isolation

One of the pressures that prisoners frequently mention is the feeling of isolation, which can increase if newspapers and radios are banned. Added frustration comes from not speaking the language or understanding the customs. Learning the language will be both a constructive use of your time and make day-to-day living much easier. In some countries, foreign prisoners are encouraged to do this. In other places you might have to apply for a correspondence course. If the prison authorities require the materials be censored you can ask the Embassy to receive them on your behalf.

If you find yourself with no other English-speaking prisoners, you are strongly advised to apply for a transfer to a prison where there are other Britons. Talk to the consular staff, as they know which prisons have the most British nationals, and also which ones have the best recreation and exercise facilities.

In some countries there is the opportunity to cook your own food. Not only is this good for your health but, by getting together with other people and pooling your food, you can develop new skills and use your time productively.

Rules can appear to be made up just to make life more difficult for prisoners. For instance, in some countries board games and cards are forbidden; in others men are allowed to smoke but women are not. The reason is often cultural or religious and, although it may seem discriminatory, prisons are simply following the practice of public life. In other cases, rules can differ between prisons in the same country. This is usually down to the ruling of a particular Governor.

Prison libraries vary greatly in what they have to offer. Magazines and books can be supplied by Prisoners Abroad and there is also the possibility of funding for educational courses. If you feel like writing letters, PA can supply International Freepost envelopes so that you can send letters without having to pay for postage, and can match you with a penpal. If you are interested in any or all of the above, please write for further information.

At the end of this section you will find more advice on coping with imprisonment, from meditation to exercise.

Stress

Some degree of stress is considered healthy, but too much time on your hands can lead to a very negative type of stress. Typical symptoms are boredom and loss of energy and motivation ('why bother? what's the point?'). Other sources of stress for a prisoner are

- worrying about people at home
- losing a loved one, through death or the relationship breaking down
- racial or sexual harassment
- being bullied
- not feeling valued/feeling useless.

The psychological effects include irritability, disturbed sleep, poor concentration and feelings of aggression towards others. Stressful events building up in your day-to-day life can trigger a period of depression.

Depression

The word depression is used to describe a range of moods from 'feeling low' to the severe condition known as 'clinical depression'. Roughly one person in six experiences some form of the illness during their lifetime. Symptoms are varied and it can be unclear whether you are responding normally to difficult things in your life, or if you are showing signs of depression. General symptoms are

- feeling irritable most of the time
- difficulty sleeping
- loss of appetite/changes in weight
- loss of energy and the will to do anything
- loss of interest or pleasure
- feeling everything is pointless
- despairing about the future.

Clearly, daily life in a foreign jail may well lend itself to these sort of feelings! Also, lack of sunlight is recognised as a factor in depression. You can tell if things are worse than just 'feeling blue' by checking these points. Has your mood

- lasted for more than two weeks?
- noticeably interfered with your relationships with other people or your ability to do ordinary things?
- made you feel worthless or guilty?
- led to you thinking about death, or even suicide?

If you answer 'yes' to any of the above you may be experiencing clinical depression and should talk to the consular staff about seeing a doctor or psychiatrist.

Some people suffer depression mildly over a period of years, others may be severely depressed for a short time. Even with mild depression it is important to identify it, as you may be at risk of suffering a more serious spell later in life.

Anxiety

There is often an overlap between depression and anxiety, as someone who is depressed may also become anxious or agitated. The same applies to stress – and the greater the stress the more anxious you are likely to feel.

Mild anxiety can be described as a feeling of discomfort or unease. If it goes on for a long time, it can affect your ability to cope with everyday life.

The most common symptoms are

- feeling restless and tense
- rapid heartbeat and breathing
- sweating palms.

These reactions are normal when a person is facing danger – but if you are suffering from anxiety they will occur even when there is no obvious danger or threat.

It can take different forms, such as panic attacks, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

OCD can apply to thoughts as well as actions. Frightening thoughts or memories playing over and over in your mind can lead to anxiety attacks. Traumatic events, such as interrogation and imprisonment, can lead to PTSD, as can loss. Usually this is understood as a relationship ending or a death, but it can also be the loss of freedom.

It's normal to feel distressed for a while after being locked up (one ex-prisoner describes it as “riding the biggest emotional roller coaster there is”) but if you keep re-living an experience – in dreams or in your thoughts – you may well be suffering from PTSD. This will make it impossible to think positively about anything or to plan for the future, and you should seek medical help.

Coping with depression or anxiety

There are a number of things that you can do to help you cope with anxiety or mild depression, and also reduce the risk of your condition getting worse.

- Talk to someone – as the old saying goes, a problem shared is a problem halved. Establishing a friendship based on trust with someone in the same situation means you can help each other through the tough times.
- Activity and exercise – not so easy in prison, but in this chapter you can find suggestions for exercise in a confined space. Physical exercise triggers chemicals in the brain that will improve your mood.
- Diet – a balanced diet will help your physical health and thus your general sense of well-being. Too much stodgy food can make you feel sluggish, while high-fibre, low-fat foods will increase energy. Recent research suggests oily fish like sardines, or fish oil supplements, can help counter depression. Too much caffeine (from tea and coffee) can increase anxiety levels.

- Relaxation techniques – yoga and breathing exercises can be beneficial, especially if you find it difficult to sleep. You will find tips on these following the fitness section. Listening to music can also help, as can reading – ‘losing yourself in a good book’.
- Taking control – a typical symptom of depression is the feeling that you can’t improve things, but even in prison there are things that you can achieve – set yourself small goals and you will feel much better when you reach them. Learning five new words of the language every day, or increasing the time you spend exercising by a few minutes, are examples.
- Positive thinking is also good for anxiety – don’t be hard on yourself, there are reasons why you feel like you do!

Lastly, read all about it – understanding what is going on is very empowering. If you would like to know more, try and get hold of leaflets or booklets. (Prisoners Abroad can send leaflets if you want them).

A-Z of medical terms

Anaemia: too few red blood cells or haemoglobin in the blood, leading to a 'washed out' look, weakness and fatigue. Lack of iron is a common cause, but it can also be a side effect of other illnesses. (**Pernicious anaemia** is when the body cannot absorb, or there is a low intake of, vitamin B12).

Apathy/apathetic is when a person seems indifferent, usually due to an illness robbing them of energy and strength.

Chronic: long-lasting.

Delirium is usually associated with fever. It can range from rambling speech and twitching muscles through to serious delusions of a violent nature.

The '**faecal-oral route**', is when faecal matter contaminates food or drink, usually via unwashed hands. This is how most stomach bugs enter the human digestive system.

Hallucinations: hearing or seeing things which are not there.

Incubation period is the time between an infection entering your system and the appearance of the first symptoms.

Intestinal infections are 'stomach bugs', the usual symptom being diarrhoea.

Lethargy/lethargic means total lack of energy.

Malaise: a feeling of feverishness and listlessness, often the first symptom of illness.

Malnourishment is lack of nourishment resulting in weight loss, physical weakness and (in extreme cases) anaemia.

Nausea/nauseous: feeling like you are about to vomit.

Salmonellae are the most common group of bacteria responsible for food poisoning.

Urethra: the tube leading from the bladder to the exterior of the body.