



We've been on dozens of cruises in the past two decades and never once were sick. Of course, there were occasions when others aboard our ship had problems with seasickness, scarfing too much food, overdoing booze and other troubles.

Also, some had been infected by other passengers who brought flu aboard with them. Of course, during excursions when some went ashore and consumed unclean street cart food and local water, it wasn't the cruise line's fault.

What set off this tirade is recent sensationalized news blared out by media about a cruise ship returning to its Florida port from the Caribbean with 2,500 passengers. The reports state that 66 of them showed symptoms of gastrointestinal illness. For anyone who can do basic math, that's about 2.5 percent. The report also said just two members of the 800-person crew of the ship were sick. Figuring out the percentage will show several zeroes following the decimal point. Today, any school or office with that few out sick, especially in wintertime, would be considered normal or healthier than normal.

Of course, any time seniors venture out, whether to shop around the corner or sail around the world, they're exposed to potential infections. To uphold their reputations, cruise lines must keep ships meticulously clean. Even if it isn't their fault when illnesses strike, it costs them millions in lost revenues, lawsuits and other problems.

Unfortunately, despite all attempts to avoid them, there will be more cruise problems in the future. There will also be accidents in the air, on train tracks and on the roadways. If you're considering a cruise, don't let exaggerated bad news about such incidents make you change your mind. Do your homework about cruise lines' reputation for safety and cleanliness. Choose wisely, then take sensible health precautions before leaving home, as well as aboard the ship and in port visits.

If statistics of the recent cruise illness incident is any indication, and you book a cruise, chances are 97.5 percent favorable that you'll enjoy it in safety and good health.