

The Survival Guide to Morocco

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@pfsg.demon.co.uk

Website: www.pfsg.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. ELA 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. (Although 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: amccoey@aol.com

The Redress Trust

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

The Redress Trust

First Floor, 4 Deans Court

St Paul's Churchyard

London EC4V 5AA

Tel: 020 7329 7332 Fax: 020 7248 5397

Email: redresstrust@gn.apc.org

Website: www.redress.org

The Morocco 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. These are listed in English and translated into one or more local languages, with ‘how to pronounce’ (phonetic) suggestions alongside.

Country background

Morocco has a population of approximately 30 million, with 45% under the age of fifteen. Less than 50% of Moroccans can read and write. The official language is Arabic, but French is widely spoken in cities and is important in education, business, law and the press. Spanish is spoken in the north, plus there are three areas where Berber is spoken: the Rif mountains, the Souss valley and the Atlas Mountains. People originally from those areas will speak Berber in the large cities.

From 1912-56 the country was divided between French and Spanish protectorates, otherwise it has been an independent state since the 9th century. Unlike neighbouring countries, Morocco was never part of the Ottoman Empire.

The capital is Rabat. Other important centres are Marrakech, Fes, Tangier and Casablanca, which is the biggest city. Morocco is a monarchy, ruled since July 1999 by King Mohammed VI. There is an elected Parliament, and the state religion is Islam.

The Monarchy

The present royal family has ruled since the 17th century and claims descent from Prophet Mohammed. Criticism of the monarchy is taboo. The King has a dual role, as both monarch and as spiritual leader (Commander of the Faithful). Under the constitution, adopted in 1972, trade unions, political parties and professional bodies can take an active part in public life, but ultimate power remain with the King. The royal family is generally respected and pictures of the King are widely displayed.

Religion and customs

Most Moroccans are Sunni Muslims, though there is also a substantial Jewish minority. Islam has a strong influence on daily life. Believers pray five times a day, facing Mecca, after washing the face, hands and feet. The most important time to attend the mosque is midday on Friday when the weekly sermon is given. The Qur'an lays down the rules for most aspects of daily life. Muslims cannot eat pork or drink alcohol and must fast between sunrise and sundown during Ramadan. (Strictly speaking, in Morocco it is drunkenness, not drinking alcohol, which is forbidden).

There is sexual inequality in Moroccan society, based on tradition and religious belief, but there are also differences between the countryside and the towns. In rural areas, girls and women generally have more of a public life – working in markets for example – while in towns women are more often at home. Public spaces, such as cafés and cinemas, are frequented mostly by men. All women are expected to keep their arms, shoulders and legs covered.

Taboos include:

- Entering prayer areas: they are strictly out-of-bounds for non-Muslims.
- The left hand: never eat, pass things or shake hands with your left hand, it is considered unhygienic.
- Open displays of affection towards the opposite sex.
- Nakedness, even in the shower with people of the same sex, is strictly forbidden.

Politics and the economy

Political and constitutional reform has been underway for some years. Following a referendum in 1996 an elected second chamber was added to the Parliament. In 1998

Morocco gained its first socialist Prime Minister and in 1999 an Association Agreement with the EU was signed. France and Spain are the main trading partners.

Morocco administers the disputed territory of Western Sahara, also claimed by the Polisario Front, an independence movement based in Algeria. Morocco supports efforts being made by the United Nations to achieve a negotiated settlement. Traditionally, Morocco has supported Arab moderates in the Arab-Israeli dispute.

The economy has made steady progress recently, after years of inflation followed by austerity measures. Still heavily dependent on agriculture, several years of drought have badly affected growth, though foreign investment in industry (including from Britain) is increasing, as is income from tourism. However, there is a fast-growing young population, high unemployment and average wages are well below European levels.

Human Rights

Until the 1990s Morocco had a poor human rights record, but progress has been made in recent years, especially by regional standards. In 1993 Morocco ratified United Nations Conventions opposing torture and discrimination against women and children, plus there is a developing human rights movement in the country.

The Criminal Justice system of Morocco

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. This chapter will help you to understand the criminal justice system of Morocco at various stages, from arrest through remand, trial, sentencing and afterwards. It includes guidance on your rights – what should be happening and when – plus some pointers on the best way to deal with your situation, and what support is available to you as a British national. You can also read about how to apply for an appeal, a Royal Pardon or a transfer. At the end you will find a short glossary of common legal terms.

Arrest and remand

Whichever country you may be in, 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.** In certain areas of Morocco the Consul will be informed by the police within hours of your arrest, in others delays of up to four days have been reported. Consular staff cannot give legal advice, but can explain the Moroccan legal system and the nature of the charge, when it is brought. They can also provide a list of lawyers, some of whom speak English.

Generally, arrest leads to detention in police cells. In theory you should be charged within 24 hours, although you may be held without charge for three or four days. You will not be allowed to see a lawyer while you are in police custody. Most of your possessions, including your passport and any other identification papers, will be taken away. They can be difficult to trace afterwards, although Consular officials will try to get them back. The standard practice is for passports to be kept by the *greffier* (Clerk of the Court) until your release.

The legal system

Islam is the state religion and Morocco has a dual legal system:

- secular, partly inherited from the French inquisitorial system
- Islamic, which settles family and inheritance matters for Moroccan Muslims and foreigners married under Moroccan law.

Most offences with which non-Muslim foreigners are charged fall under the secular penal code. 'Inquisitorial' means the use of intensive questioning, as the system has tended to rely heavily on confessions. Along with police reports, they make up the bulk of evidence in most cases.

Morocco is a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. However, it has been fairly standard practice to handcuff a suspect to a chair during interrogation. There have been reports of questioning lasting up to 15 hours, without food or drink, involving relays of officers. A statement, typed in Arabic, is then produced for you to sign. Remember that you should never sign anything you cannot read. It will be a confession, and could include things you know nothing about. If you find yourself under pressure to sign, ask to speak to the British Consul.

Historically, Moroccan law has not recognised the right to silence or the idea of being innocent until proven guilty, but things look set to change. A new Criminal Procedure Code has been drafted and discussed by the Cabinet. The Ministry of Human Rights will consider it, and then it will go before Parliament. It introduces *habeas corpus* (the presumption of innocence) and states that confessions 'obtained under duress' (that is, made under pressure or by use of force or threats) are not acceptable as evidence.

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

Moroccan law requires that you be charged in front of a judge (*juge d'instruction*, judicial investigator, or Examining Magistrate) within 24 hours of being detained. This can be extended to 48 hours on approval of the Prosecutor, and up to a maximum of 96 hours in cases of national security. You will normally be taken from the police station to court where the Prosecutor will read the charges. After the first appearance you have the right to see a lawyer. You should be informed of this right, but this does not always happen. At this stage, provisional remand may be granted by the Examining Magistrate. He will take police reports into account, and a signed statement will also influence whether you are remanded to prison.

In law the remand period should not exceed 60 days. In practice it can be just a few days, or it may be extended five times, but you do have the right to challenge each extension. Any time served on remand will count as part of your sentence. Certain

restrictions can be imposed on remand prisoners, such as no contact with family or other detainees, but this rarely applies to foreigners. You will be able to wear your own clothes and will not be expected to work. Remand and sentenced prisoners are not segregated.

What happens when I am charged?

At your first hearing before a *tribunal* (court) you should be notified of your rights. Sometimes this doesn't happen, therefore you should know what they are. In theory they include

- the right to an interpreter
- the right to consult a lawyer
- the right to be visited at a reasonable time by consular staff, and by members of your family
- if unwell, the right to be examined by a doctor.

Justice in Morocco is often swift. It is likely that a few days after the first hearing you will be taken to the *Tribunal de première instance* (Court of the First Instance). If you have appointed a lawyer, he can ask for an adjournment to prepare your case. If you do not have a lawyer, your case will be heard almost immediately. If you are convicted, your case then goes automatically to the Appeal court, whether you have a lawyer or not.

You can expect to wait at least seven more days before your second court hearing. Here you will be given the chance to speak, or have your lawyer speak on your behalf. Again, you may find yourself put under pressure to confess, or to sign an official report, before having access to a lawyer. You should not sign, but do tell the Consul.

Lawyers

Consular staff cannot give legal advice, but they can provide you with a list of lawyers, some of whom speak English. Prisoners Abroad can also supply information on legal aid, court proceedings and finding a lawyer.

If you cannot afford a private lawyer, the court should appoint a legal aid lawyer, but the quality varies and they usually only speak Arabic. There have been reports of lawyers turning up at court but never actually discussing the case with their client. If you are not satisfied with a legal aid lawyer, you may change him, with the permission of the court.

There are some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Morocco with lawyer-members who are prepared to work for free. However, they tend to focus on human

rights issues, rather than cases of drug trafficking. As in any country, some lawyers are better than others – including those who charge fees. If you do pay, it's wise to agree a flat fee for the whole case before starting, or you may find yourself facing 'extra expenses'. Ex-prisoners advise talking to other prisoners, as they often know which lawyers to avoid and what hidden costs there might be.

Categories of charges

Morocco has separate legal codes for drug and non-drug offences. The Penal Code recognises four types of offence, for which there are four tiers of courts. The four types of offence are

- *contravention*, punishable with the lowest sentences
- *délit correctional*, from one to five years
- *délit de police*, less than two years
- *crime*, punishable with more than five years imprisonment.

Most cases involving foreigners are dealt with by the Court of the First Instance, overseen by an Examining Magistrate. Despite allegations in individual cases, there is no evidence of widespread judicial corruption.

Minor offences

A *contravention* (misdemeanour) carries the lowest penalties. If your sentence includes fines, they must be paid before you are eligible for release. There are two types of fines, the administrative (court) fine, and the *Régie des tabacs* ('tobacco tax' or duty). Failure to pay can mean extra time added on to your sentence, anything from one month to two years. *Frais de jugement* (court costs) are usually a small amount, averaging between £15 and £30, and are paid at the time the court fine is paid. (Further information can be found towards the end of this chapter under '**Paying off your fines**').

Serious offences

Drugs and firearms offences are considered the most serious and punished most harshly. Anyone caught with a gun receives a guaranteed twenty-year sentence, while a drug conviction will carry a sentence of six months to life. The length of sentence usually depends on the type of drugs and the quantity involved, although there have been

reports of sentences which contradict this. The death penalty is only given for multiple murder and terrorist offences and is almost always commuted to life imprisonment.

Can I get bail?

Bail can only be granted with the agreement of the *Procureur du Roi* (Public Prosecutor) and the Examining Magistrate. It is never granted for drug offences. Foreigners find it impossible to get bail because of their temporary status in the country, being unable to give guarantees that they will not run away and will be available to report to the police station as required.

Interpreters and translators

Your trial will be heard in Arabic and the court is supposed to appoint an interpreter, but in practice this often does not happen. It is not always possible to find capable interpreters, especially in smaller towns. If they are not trained to translate court proceedings they can totally misunderstand things. There have also been reports of bias in favour of the prosecution. The Consulate can provide you with lists of sworn interpreters and Prisoners Abroad can help with organising the translation of documents.

What happens at the trial?

There is no jury system in Morocco. Trials are heard by a judge or judges, with up to five sitting per case. They rely largely, at times solely, on police reports, and there is no guarantee that your plea will be discussed.

There have also been reports of witness statements being obtained by force, and even when such statements have been retracted in court they have still been accepted as 'evidence'.

After conviction

Sentences

No suspended sentences are given to foreigners. Jail terms range from one month to life. If you are convicted of a drug offence you will be given a fine in addition to a jail term of six months to life. The size of the fine depends on the quantity of the drugs you possessed or carried. (There are fines for other types of conviction too). You must pay your fines or face extra time in prison. If you were convicted as part of a gang you may

not be eligible for release – or transfer to another prison – until all the others have paid their fines too.

Appeals

Appeals must be lodged within ten days of conviction and sentencing. You may appeal against the actual conviction or against the length of sentence, but the prosecution can also appeal for an increased sentence. In drug cases, lawyers will usually advise against appealing a sentence, because it can result in a heavier one. If you do decide to put in an appeal, bear in mind that it can result in additional costs (one example, from 1995, cost £750).

If your appeal is rejected you may apply to the *Cour de cassation* (the Supreme Court of Appeal). It will not re-examine the case on grounds of evidence or questions of guilt or innocence, but only look at procedures and points of law. This is usually a very long process, and you may find your release date comes before your *cassation* takes place.

Parole

There is no parole for foreign nationals.

Remission

There is no system for granting remission (time off your sentence) for foreign nationals.

The Royal Pardon

Royal Pardons are granted by the King, and your plea should be addressed to him.

- The original plea should be sent to the King, via the British Embassy, who will forward it directly to the Royal Palace with a covering letter from HM Ambassador to the *Directeur du Secrétariat Particulier de sa Majesté*.
- A copy should be addressed to the Minister of Justice through prison channels. The Director of the prison will add a comment on your behaviour and this will affect whether your application moves forward or not.
- Decisions on Royal Pardons are taken case by case. There are no hard and fast rules for success, and not many are granted. Below you can read about what you need to do to make the best of your application. (You should have served at least one-third of your sentence before applying).

- Pardons granted on sentences that include customs fines do not come into force until the fines have been paid, unless it is clearly stated that the Pardon includes the fines.
- Obtaining a Pardon can be costly. Expect to pay for translations, possibly extra legal fees, and your plane fare home. This is essential. The Embassy or Consulate can hold the money for you until you need to buy the ticket.

It will be helpful if you submit your application with supporting letters. The most important will be from family members. Others should be from friends and past employers, plus one from either your doctor or another professional person who will support your case, for example your MP or MEP, or a lawyer. If appropriate you may also request support from Prisoners Abroad. About half a dozen letters is enough, but obviously the more the better.

The process of collecting letters of support can take a long time, so allow plenty of time for replies and to follow up all offers of help. The letters should be written in, or at least translated into, French or Arabic. In an emergency, Prisoners Abroad may be able to help with translations. The Embassy also provides translation into French for such letters, but these will not take priority over other urgent tasks the Embassy translator has to deal with.

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 Morocco at The Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. Alternatively, you could write to Prisoners Abroad and ask them to pass your letter on.

What should I say?

The actual content of your letter of application, and the supporting ones, will depend upon the circumstances of your case. However, you must make clear that you

- understand the seriousness of your offence
- repent your past conduct
- long for reunion with your family, homeland and culture
- wish to lead a socially useful life in future
- will never do wrong again.

Priority may be given if there are strong medical grounds for an early release, but you must never criticize prison conditions, even if they are making your health worse. Equally, you must avoid any criticism of the Moroccan judicial system and never claim innocence (even if you believe yourself to be innocent) as that implies fault with the system that convicted you.

When should I apply?

It is best to send requests one or two months before an important Islamic or Moroccan feast day. When Pardons are granted it is usually on those days. However, it has been some years since a Pardon was granted to a European on a Muslim holiday. The feast days are the end of Ramadan (*Aïd es-Saghir*), *Aïd El Adha*, and *Aïd El Maoulid*.

National days are 30 July (*Fête du Trône*), 20 August (*Révolution du Roi et du peuple*), 21 August (the King's birthday) and 18 November (Independence Day). On rare occasions of national importance – for example, the Pope's visit to Morocco – the King may grant Pardons to foreign prisoners. If you wish to send your application to the King through prison channels, you should write to:

Sa Majesté le Roi Mohammed VI
sous couvert de Monsieur le Ministre de la Justice
Direction des Affaires Criminelles et des Grâces
Place de la Mamounia
Rabat

Paying off your fines

There are two types of fines, the administrative (or court) fine and the *Régie des tabacs* ('tobacco tax' or duty). The *Régie des tabacs* can be negotiated, so you should pay it as late as possible, to avoid giving the impression that you are wealthy.

You will normally have to pay off all fines before you are released from prison, unless you have been granted a Royal Pardon in which it is spelled out that you do not have to do so. You can also be released without paying the court fine if

- you have applied for *cassation* and reached your expected date of release before the date has been set for the *cassation*
- no *mandat d'arrêt* (arrest warrant) has been issued against you by the court for non-payment of either fine, and *contrainte par corps* (imprisonment for non-payment) has not been specified in your sentence.

(Note that this is the official position. Sometimes fines are imposed arbitrarily, late on in a sentence, with nothing previously specified).

If you receive *contrainte par corps* you have the right to appeal to the *Procureur du Roi* that the extra time to be served should be halved, on the grounds that you are unable to pay. If your request is accepted you will be released after serving half of the extra time given. You will need two letters to support your claim of insolvency. These are

- a letter from the Inland Revenue stating that you have not been liable to pay income tax for a certain period
- a letter from the Department of Employment or Job Centre that you were in receipt of unemployment benefit or income support for exactly the same period.

These two letters need to be translated into French or Arabic, and must be typed on headed paper. If you were not in receipt of benefits you have no chance of getting a reduction in the *contrainte par corps*.

Transfers

Transfers between prisons within Morocco can be arranged by applying to the prison authorities. They can also be imposed by the prison authorities for disciplinary reasons. A Prison Transfer Agreement between Morocco and the United Kingdom was signed in early 2002.

Release and deportation

In drugs cases, expulsion is always given as part of the verdict and you will not be allowed to enter the country again for five years. Some prisoners are released without delay, and with no detention at Immigration. If your passport is in date and you have

lodged enough money with the Embassy to buy a ticket out of Morocco, you should have no problems.

You will be collected from your cell early on the day of release and given your valuables and passport. You will then be taken to the police station closest to the prison and put in the custody of the Immigration Police. A consular officer usually arranges to meet you there, and any money left in your account is returned to you, either in dirhams or pounds. What happens next depends on how much money you have and where you are in the country – i.e, whether you will be flying to the UK or taking a ferry to Spain. The Immigration Police will take you to the airport or port, usually, but not always, on the same day.

Extradition

If you are to be extradited for trial in Britain a different process applies. The Ministry of Justice in Rabat deals with the administration of the Moroccan court's verdict. When the process is complete, the *Sûreté nationale* (security police) will ensure that you are collected by British police officers.

In the UK you should find your sentence reduced by the amount of time spent in jail in Morocco awaiting extradition.

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 grammes 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 remission 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 Flagrate 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 a Moroccan jail. (What happens during remand, trial and sentencing can be found in the earlier chapter on the Criminal Justice system). Ex-prisoners say that nothing is guaranteed, things change on a whim, so the advice of more experienced prisoners – plus your own common sense – are essential for survival.

During the remand period you will be held in the prison closest to where you were arrested, alongside sentenced prisoners. You can apply for a transfer to another prison once you have been convicted and sentenced, although there may be restrictions if the court costs have not been paid. There have been cases of foreign prisoners being transferred against their will, as a punishment.

After sentence

Ex-prisoners all say the key to survival is money – in Moroccan prisons you pay for everything. If your family are unable to send any money, and you have no other means of support, Prisoners Abroad may be able to make a small monthly grant for food and other essentials. Let the Consul know if you need this support, or write directly to the PA caseworker for Morocco.

Prison rules

Morocco is a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Prison Directors interpret this in different ways, which does make a difference to how each prison is run. Punishment beatings occur in some, whilst others are much more relaxed. A bill of Prison Regulations was adopted in late 1999, in an attempt to standardise the running of prisons. Limited funds and red tape will mean changes are likely to be slow, but an important step forward is that the bill lists what are breaches of regulations, plus the disciplinary measures that can be taken – although it does not link specific rules to types of punishment.

Some prisoners find the mental pressure harder than the physical conditions. It has been remarked that it's difficult to avoid breaking prison rules because "the guards make them

up as they go along". If you do break the rules you risk being put in solitary confinement, though it happens less often to foreigners. Fighting is a punishable offence, as is drug-taking or dealing. The worst punishment is the *fallakah* (beating on the soles of the feet). Again, foreigners are far less likely to be beaten than locals.

There have been reports that complaints about ill-treatment are not taken seriously by prison officials and never reach the Director. If you feel you have a justified complaint, you should let the Consul know at the earliest opportunity.

General prison conditions

There are forty prisons in Morocco, built to hold 18,000 people. In reality more than 40,000 are behind bars. The biggest prison is Oukacha at Casablanca, which currently holds about 8,000, including 900 women. The most crowded is Tangier, holding up to five times its capacity. Prisoners are mixed together, regardless of their crimes.

Most foreign prisoners share cells. Overcrowding is normal – typically, 30 men share a cell meant for 18. Some prisons have dormitories with anything from 60 to 150 men in one room, and overcrowding can be worse in the women's sections. How bad it is depends on where you are – Tetouan has been described as "a dungeon of the Middle Ages" and Tangier as "a nightmare prison". The advice of experienced prisoners is to apply for a transfer to Salé as soon as you are eligible.

Prisoners sleep on the floor, lying on a bed-roll or thin mattress, which can be bought from a guard or a prisoner about to be released. Blankets may be supplied but sheets are not, though you can get them if you pay. You are strongly advised to buy new bedding if you can afford it, as this will greatly reduce the risk of skin infections and lice. You should regularly check your clothing and bedding anyway, and don't let anyone else use your towel – no matter how clean you are, infestation from other prisoners is a real problem. (See the **Health issues for prisoners** chapter for information on treatment).

Mosquitoes, cockroaches and rats are common. Sanitation is a tap and a hole-in-the-ground toilet inside each cell. Daily cold showers are usually available, but with hundreds using a few showerheads, many people find it easier to wash in a bucket in their cell. During the summer months water can run short. Hot water is sometimes available, if you pay. (Note: nakedness, even in the shower, is taboo in Morocco).

The temperature tends to be either very hot or very cold. You have to wear your own clothes, so it is important to have both light and warm clothing.

In the older jails, where there are fewer facilities, prisoners are locked up for as much as 23 hours a day. In the newer prisons there is generally more free time, with lock-in from 5pm to 9 am. It is normal practice for cells to be locked round the clock at weekends.

A client of Prisoners Abroad commented that “the general atmosphere in all the prisons I’ve witnessed is fear.” As a result, rioting is very rare. The most common way that inmates protest is by going on hunger strike. In reality, you are more likely to suffer from poor diet, lack of privacy, boredom and loneliness than brutal treatment, which is directed mostly at Moroccans. Incidents of verbal abuse from the guards have been reported, and some women prisoners have suffered sexual harassment. If you experience serious harassment, threats or violence you must report it to the consular staff as soon as possible. It is their responsibility to take up allegations of mistreatment made by British nationals. Even the suggestion that you will be reporting to the Consul can make a difference to how you are treated.

Theft can be a problem, as most Moroccan prisoners are literally penniless. For example, laundry is often stolen, so some people pay Moroccans (in cigarettes, usually) to do their washing and guard it while it dries.

Islam influences all aspects of Moroccan life, including attitudes to crime and punishment, especially drug trafficking. Islamic ritual and prayer are part of daily life, in prison as much as outside. During Ramadan both prisoners and guards go all day without eating, drinking or smoking. Tempers can be short, so don’t get drawn into any disagreements - remember that you are the foreigner and this is their country.

Prison life tends to be less harsh for foreign women. Some have found that they have a higher level of respect within the prison ‘pecking order’, and that Moroccan inmates are friendly and helpful. Women who give birth in prison are transferred to a maternity ward for the birth, and may keep the child with them until it is four years of age. Whenever possible, they are allowed to live in a cell separate from other prisoners.

Drugs

In some prisons drug abuse is rife. With no remission for good behaviour there is little incentive to behave well, and in some cases guards are reportedly bribed to ignore drug

dealing. If you are caught holding or taking drugs, punishment can be severe (see above). If you inject drugs you run the risk of contracting serious blood-borne infections, like AIDS and hepatitis (see Health below).

Health and hygiene

Standards of healthcare are low. Poor sanitation, inadequate ventilation, extremes of temperature, bad food and people sleeping “like sardines in a tin” combine to help the spread of infections. Colds and stomach bugs are common, especially among new prisoners. In recent years there have been reported outbreaks of tuberculosis (TB) and even cholera. In Morocco TB is not a ‘notifiable disease’, yet has been described as “rife” in prisons. If you suspect someone in your cell has it (the symptoms are described in the health chapter) you should report it to the Consul, who can ask that they be moved.

Prisoners are generally wary of being treated in the prison hospital due to needles being re-used. This increases the risk of Hepatitis B or HIV infection. Another possible route of infection is the practice, by some Moroccan prisoners, of cutting themselves.

Dental problems are also common. The standard of treatment varies – in Salé prison there are two dentists and prisoners can be seen once a week, whilst in Tangier treatment is limited to pulling teeth.

There is no gynaecological service as such. If the general doctor cannot treat an infection it is possible to be referred to an outside doctor. Ask the consular visitor about a referral. (Towels and tampons can be ordered through the grocer).

Depression troubles some prisoners. Feelings of isolation are normal, especially if you don’t speak French or Arabic. The lack of mental stimulation, and facing up to a long sentence, can also affect your mental state. In Salé, consular staff can arrange for you to have an appointment with a psychiatrist who visits one half day a week. Bear in mind that you will probably have to wait a long time to see a doctor, who will only speak French.

When you have a consular visit it’s up to you to explain exactly how you are feeling, mentally and physically. If you have a serious medical condition you should ask for a transfer to Salé, where facilities are better and it is possible to arrange for certain treatment (such as X-rays and scans) outside the prison.

The range of medicines available free varies from prison to prison. Salé has a list of drugs that are dispensed without charge (depending on stocks) whilst in Tangier you will have to pay for everything. The prison doctor can prescribe medicines to be bought by the consular staff on your behalf, although you must have funds to cover the cost. If you are in a prison some distance from consular services – e.g. Tetouan – it makes sense to keep some money in the prison *cantine* (shop) so the authorities can buy medicine for you should you fall ill. Prisoners Abroad has a medical fund for prisoners with no money at all. It can help with paying for essential medical or dental treatment. PA also runs a vitamin programme, which enables the Embassy to bulk-buy multivitamins for supply to British nationals.

Later in this guide you will find a chapter specifically on health. It includes suggestions for reducing the risk of infections, improving your physical and mental well-being, and keeping fit.

Food and drink

A typical prison meal is soup and bread, sometimes with vegetables boiled to a pulp, described as “slop in a tub.” “Eat it at your own risk” one ex-prisoner commented. You will need extra food and vitamins to maintain basic health.

Moroccans have cooked food brought in by relatives and some foreigners make informal arrangements to buy their extra food. Others form ‘food groups’ to share food costs and cooking. This is a good way to get variety in your diet. The prison *cantines* stock tinned and dry goods, soft drinks and bottled water. In Salé you can order in fresh fruit, bread, milk and eggs. In Rabat and Tangier, consular staff make arrangements with local grocers to deliver fresh food and a range of other goods. Your family can send money to the Embassy to be held in an account to pay for it (see below).

Mail and money

You can receive and send mail directly. There are no restrictions on the amount, but there are rules about what you can and can’t receive. See **Keeping in touch** for more information.

Visits

Consular staff from Rabat and Casablanca visit prisons once every six weeks, though if there is an emergency they will make a special visit. Tangier is visited monthly, plus the

chaplain comes in fortnightly. An Anglican priest visits Oukacha (Casablanca) and Salé prisons once a month. Other religious groups also visit prisoners, but they tend to be French, Spanish or Italian speakers.

Consular staff will arrange clearance for visits by family members and friends, though the prison authorities may refuse non-relatives. See **Keeping in touch** for more information.

Work

Generally there is no work for foreign prisoners, although some Britons have reported that unpaid jobs are available, for example in the kitchen. You may need the help of the Consul to be assigned work, so speak to the consular visitor if you want to work.

Leisure & education

Very few Moroccan prisoners or guards speak English, so it is a good idea to learn French or Arabic. French is the second language of the country and is spoken in all prisons, plus Spanish in the north. A language will help you to understand what's going on, communicate your needs and also ease the boredom and mental isolation of prison life. If you have the funds to pay for learning materials, the Consuls are happy to provide them. There is also the possibility of funding for educational courses through Prisoners Abroad. If you are interested, you should write for further information.

There is no provision for recreational activities for women in Moroccan prisons. Tangier, for instance, has a gym, library and classrooms, but only for men, and Tetouan's library is also restricted to male prisoners. Normally you are not allowed to use these facilities until after the Appeal Court has delivered its verdict. There are time restrictions on exercise. Walking around in the courtyard (*'patio'*) can be anything from ten minutes to two hours a day, and none at all on holidays and holy days. There are pay-to-use pool tables in some prisons.

Salé: Running or walking around (*'patio'*) is allowed for two hours a day. Football and basketball are played once or twice a week, and prisoners who want to train in boxing have made arrangements for equipment. Hobbies such as model building, jigsaws and table tennis are also allowed. However, there is nothing guaranteed about any of these activities. One television, available at a charge, can receive Moroccan, Spanish and

Portuguese channels, plus NBC. There are two libraries, well stocked with English books. Educational courses can be arranged through the consular staff.

Tangier: *Patio* is allowed for two hours each morning and afternoon. There is a gym, library and classrooms for language learning, music and art classes – but only for men. Women may be given permission to do drawing, painting or needlework, and the consular staff can bring you books. Male prisoners can buy television sets, but there is only one channel. Radios are permitted in cells if earphones are used. The library has a good stock of books in English. Some prisoners have described Tangier as more relaxed, but others have experienced a lot of hassle from the guards, with rules changed daily.

Tetouan: No sport or recreation, and very little *patio*. There is a yard where you may be allowed to walk for a few minutes once or twice a week. There is at least one TV set, with channels in French and Arabic. There is a small library with a few books in English and other European languages.

For Muslims in prison there is communal prayer up to five times a day, and a make-shift mosque on Fridays. For Christians, a Christmas lunch and a carol service is organised by European consular sections at Salé prison.

For further information on funding for courses, obtaining magazines, books or a penpal, 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 Moroccan prison system.

Post, parcels and phones

There is no limit to the number of letters and parcels prisoners can send and receive, but

- letters are read and censored at most prisons
- there are rules about what can and can't be sent in a parcel
- large parcels are more likely to be opened than small ones.

Letters

The censoring of mail means delays, and sometimes post doesn't get through at all. Tell people to write out your full name, address and prison number, and put their own name and address on the back, to lessen the chance of mail going astray. It is also a good idea to number letters, to keep track of them. People writing to you could make photocopies of their letters, in case they need to re-send any. Alternatively, letters can be sent via the Embassy, to be brought in on monthly consular visits. They will be read first, just as they would be in the prison.

In some prisons you must write letters on prison paper, in others you have to provide your own stationery. Prisoners Abroad can supply International Freepost envelopes so that you can write to your friends and family without having to pay for postage. Although you are usually allowed to write in English, censorship rules mean that either a member of prison staff will translate them, or they will be sent to Rabat for translation, before posting. In at least one prison (Tetouan) you are expected to write in French or Arabic – English won't pass the censor.

Parcels

The Embassy no longer accepts parcels due to abuse of the system in the past. Any received will be returned to sender. Parcels can be sent to prisons, but you might have to pay guards to receive them. Small parcels are less likely to be opened.

What can be sent?

Clothing, dehydrated food (soups, noodles etc), sweets (not chocolates) and cold remedies (but not painkillers) are permitted. Tobacco is forbidden. Music cassettes, batteries and toiletries are often removed from parcels.

Books, magazines and newspapers will be looked at and may be censored. If no-one at the prison can translate them they are often confiscated. Puzzle books are not censored. In at least one Moroccan jail you are obliged to place books in the library. Morocco is a Muslim country and something that seems harmless in Britain might be prohibited there. An example is 'Page Three', which would be regarded as pornography. Even photographs of people wearing swimsuits can cause problems.

You should check out what goods can be ordered through your prison shop and the local grocer. Sending money to prisoners overseas is often more a more practical option.

Phoning

It is possible in some prisons to make telephone calls, but only after a lot of queuing and with strict limits on time allowed. Hundreds of prisoners want to make calls at the same time, and usually only one call a week is permitted (prisoners in Tangier say they get only five minutes). However, the rules often change. Phone numbers have to be cleared with the prison authorities through the consular staff.

It's best to give family and friends a range of dates and times when you will try to ring, and tell them not to be disappointed if calls don't come very often and don't last very long. The phones operate on cards, which can be ordered along with your groceries.

Money

You may be allowed to carry a small amount of money in coins, but carrying paper money is a punishable offence.

Your family can send money for you to the Foreign Office in London and they will forward it to the Embassy in Rabat, to be kept in an account for you. Consular staff will buy or order things you need and then deduct the cost from the funds held. (The address

to send money is at the end of this chapter – tell your relatives to phone them first, to check how to go about it).

Being visited

Bearing in mind how different Morocco 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 it noisy and confusing when they first arrive. 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 Morocco
- how to find the prison and what happens when they get there
- everything they should know about the 'dos and don'ts' of visiting (for example, women visitors should make sure their clothing covers them as much as possible).

They must get in touch with the consular section of the British Embassy well in advance, as consular staff arrange clearance for visits to prisoners. (Their address is at the end of this chapter). They will need passport numbers, personal details like place and date of birth, address etc, plus the dates of the planned visit. They can also supply information on particular prisons and how to get there. A couple of weeks before your visitors leave the U.K. it is wise for them to confirm with the Consulate that permission to visit has definitely been granted. A few other things it's worth checking are

- exactly what documents will they need to show at the prison? (e.g. passport, letter of introduction to the director of the prison)
- if there are there any restrictions on non-relatives visiting? can children visit?
- can 'open' or marital visits be arranged?
- can extra visits can be arranged?

Visits can last from ten minutes to two hours, depending on the prison Director and the guards. (Some prisoners have reported that a couple of packets of cigarettes might "help to ease the way for longer visits.") In prisons where foreigners are held, 'open' visits, sitting either side of a table, may be allowed. Some prison governors permit marital visits between married prisoners, though they are prone to disruption and there is little privacy.

A few other useful tips are 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 intended visiting dates
- check that visiting days and times have not changed
- let visitors know what they can bring in for you (for example, locally bought tobacco, but not duty-free).

Religious holidays

It is probably best to avoid visiting Morocco during an Islamic period like Ramadan, as transport schedules are often changed. Although only Muslims are expected to fast, people often feel uncomfortable eating, drinking or smoking in public. Ramadan lasts for a month. In 2001 it began on 17 November and each year it moves back approximately eleven days.

What is visiting day like?

Bearing in mind that rules and conditions vary from prison to prison, prepare your visitors for what they are likely to experience on arrival. For instance

- a thorough search of their bags, probably less so on the body
- items they are carrying being judged as possible weapons
- perhaps a short wait to see you, or possibly up to a couple of hours.

Once they get inside, will they find

- prisoners and visitors separated by a metal grille?
- a metre-wide gap either side, patrolled by guards?
- up to 40 visitors all shouting across the gap?

Or is there a system of 'open' visits at your prison? Will you be able to sit at a table and talk to your visitor face-to-face? How many guards will there be, and will they be armed?

What can visitors bring you?

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

Food: cooked food, which can be bought near or at the prison, such as chicken and chips, fried fish, Moroccan tajine etc. Fresh foods such as fruit, bread, butter, cheese, and mint, for tea. Dried foods, like fruit and nuts, tea, coffee, powdered milk, stock cubes, instant soup and noodles. Tinned fish, fruit and condensed milk. Also jam, biscuits, cake, sweets, jelly cubes, and two or three kilos of sugar.

For keeping food: plastic food containers with airtight lids, plus plastic cups, plates and cutlery. A camping can (for making tea) and a Thermos flask are also useful.

Toiletries and medicines: detergent, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush, comb, plasters, skin cream, multivitamins, iron tablets, cold remedies, permitted medicines.

Other items: pencils, ballpoints, felt-tips, postage stamps, stationery, paperback books, magazines, phone cards.

Clothing and bedding: sheets, towels, T-shirts, underwear, jeans.

Tobacco: up to 25 packets of cigarettes, which must be a Moroccan brand, bought in the country (including Moroccan *Marlboro*). *Marquise* is also recommended, as they can be exchanged for cheaper cigarettes at a favourable rate. Rolling tobacco and matches are also permitted. Cigarettes and tobacco are currency in Moroccan prisons, so non-smokers also find them useful.

Forbidden items: cash, alcohol, glass bottles and jars, raw foods (like eggs, meat and potatoes), painkillers and some prescription drugs, plus certain kinds of publications – anything that might be deemed 'pornographic', and political material that the authorities might view as 'subversive'.

How to get there

By air: to Tangier, Rabat or Casablanca. The cost of an air ticket will depend on the season and the travel agency used. Some have cheap deals, though they should be ABTA bonded.

Plane and ferry: fly to Spain, then take a ferry to Morocco. For example: Algeciras to Tangier or Ceuta; Tarifa to Tangier; Almería or Málaga to Melilla. The high season is mid-June to mid-September, when there are more boats.

By train: it is possible to travel from London via Paris and Madrid to Tangier or Casablanca with a combined train/ferry ticket.

Visitors are advised to stay at a reputable hotel, near to the Embassy or Consulate. However, do not rely on consular services to get taxis to the prison – it has been reported that they are overcharged. It is not a good idea for women to travel alone in Morocco, especially if they are inexperienced travellers.

Contact information

The British Embassy, Rabat
Consular Section
17 Boulevard de la Tour Hassan
BP 45, Rabat
Morocco

Money for prisoners should be sent to:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Desk Officer for Morocco
Consular Division
Old Admiralty Building
London SW1 2PA
Tel: 020 7270 1500

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

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).

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.

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.

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 also 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. However, extra food is the 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.	<p><u>Foods high in starch:</u> Cornflakes, porridge, bread, yam, biscuits, rice potatoes, pasta.</p> <p><u>High in natural sugars:</u> honey, sultanas, dried fruit, fresh fruit, milk.</p> <p><u>High in refined sugars:</u> sugar, jam, chocolate, biscuits, tinned fruit in syrup</p>
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.

Food Type	Function	Found in

Mineral	Function	Found in
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beriberi (inflammation of the nerves) • Sores in the corner of the mouth • Pellagra (dark, scaly skin) • Anaemia or pernicious anaemia 	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.

Vitamins	Function	Found in
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to nerve cells 	
Vitamin C	<p>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.</p>	<p>Green peppers, oranges, cabbage, fruit juices, mango, sweet potato, potatoes, plantain. (If you are able to cook your own food, steam vegetables and drink the water afterwards).</p>
Vitamin D	<p>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.</p>	<p>Cod liver oil, tinned salmon/sardines, margarine, evaporated milk, Cornflakes.</p>
Vitamin E	<p>Required for general health; shortages can result in anaemia.</p>	<p>Vegetable oils, nuts and seeds, cereals and eggs</p>
Vitamin K	<p>Needed for normal clotting of the blood.</p>	<p>Spinach, cabbage, peas and cereals.</p>

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 halfway 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.

The exercises above are only a guideline, therefore 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 exercises.

Likewise, the exercises/postures in the section following on yoga are also only a guideline, and each individual takes 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 of 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 whim 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: when there are 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 that 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 general 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.

