

AIR TRAVEL HEALTH TIPS

How can I improve plane travel?

Most people don't have any problems when they fly, but it's possible to make airplane travel safer and more comfortable. Here are some tips:

- Carry enough of all of your medicines in your carry-on luggage. Bring enough medicine to last your whole trip. Take extra medicine with you in case your return trip is delayed.
- If you have diabetes or epilepsy, carry a notification and identification card (like the "Diabetes Alert Card" from the American Diabetes Association (phone: 800-DIABETES).
- Have the name and phone number of your doctor with you in case of an emergency.
- Remember to bring along the names and dosages of all of your medicines.
- Since the air in airplanes is very dry, drink nonalcoholic, decaffeinated beverages and water so you don't get dehydrated.

What can I do about jet lag?

- Get plenty of sleep before you leave.
- Don't drink a lot of alcohol.
- Eat well-balanced meals.
- Avoid overeating.
- Exercise as much as you can on your trip.
- Use sleep medicines for only a few days.
- Get used to a new time zone by going along with the local meal and bedtime schedules.
- Melatonin may help with jet lag, but no one knows how long it can be used safely. Tell your doctor if you plan to take melatonin or any other herbal medicines.

What about pain in my ears?

If you usually have ear pain while flying, check with your doctor if you could take a decongestant medicine before you get on the plane. You can also swallow often and chew gum during the flight. Babies can suck on a bottle or a pacifier during the flight. These tips work better if you try them before your ears start to hurt.

What else should I do?

Even healthy people can get blood clots in their legs after long flights. Try to walk every now and then during your flight (unless the crew tells you not to). It also helps to drink enough water, to stretch your calf muscles while you're sitting and to wear support stockings.

If your doctor wants you to take oxygen when you travel, remember to tell the airline about this way ahead of your flight. The airline will provide oxygen for you, for a fee. Federal air regulations don't allow you to carry your own oxygen unit on a plane. You'll have to make arrangements ahead of time for oxygen at your destination and also for layovers between flights. You can also arrange for special meals or a wheelchair ahead of time, if needed. It's dangerous to fly right after scuba diving. You'll need to wait 12 to 24 hours after diving. Ask your doctor or diving authorities for guidelines on flying after scuba diving.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your doctor.

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