

Traveling by air this season?

Check out our holiday health tips

Q. How can I improve plane travel?

A. 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 your medicines in your carry-on luggage. Ask your doctor if you should change your dosages if you're eating and sleeping times will change at your destination. Bring enough medicine to last your whole trip. Take extra medicine with you in case your return trip is delayed. Make sure that the medications are in the original prescription bottle to prevent questioning and delay if you are searched at the airport.
- If you have diabetes or epilepsy, carry a notification and identification card (such as the Diabetes Alert Card from the American Diabetes Association; phone 800-DIABETES, or write the to the American Diabetes Association, 1660 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314). 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 your medicines.
- Because the air in airplanes is very dry, drink nonalcoholic, decaffeinated beverages and water so you don't get dehydrated.

Q. What can I do about jet lag?

A. Follow these tips:

- Get plenty of sleep before you leave
- It's best not to drink alcohol when flying but if you do limit it to one or two drinks
- 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

Q. What about pain in my ears?

A. If you usually have ear pain while flying, try taking a decongestant medicine before you get on the plane the next time you travel. 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.



Q. What else can I do?

A. Try to walk every now and then during your flight (unless the crew tells you not to). Even healthy people can get blood clots in their legs after long flights and walking, stretching and moving may help prevent problems. 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 far in advance 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 the plane. You will 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.