

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release



Top tips to fly safely and combat jetlag

Flying is certainly the most efficient way of getting from A-B quickly, but it does have a number of risks associated - some more obvious than others! We know that we should take notice where the exits are and fastening our seatbelts, but there are other tips we can apply to make airplane travel safer and more comfortable - not the least following some basics to prevent the dreaded DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis) as even very healthy people can develop these potentially fatal blood clots - and it can happen just easily in Business and First Class travel!

Why does jetlag occur?

Jetlag is not feeling tired from a miserable plane flight. Jetlag is when your internal body clock is out of synch with the local time zone. Hormones normally synchronize your body clock with the daylight. This internal clock guides you when to feel hungry, tired and even how often to use the bathroom. It may take 24 hours to adjust to every three hours of 'time jump' which is why it can take up to 5 days to feel normal after flying from the UK to Australia.

How to combat jetlag?

You need not get off the plane feeling like a zombie - especially if you are travelling west which is invariably easier on the body. If you are travelling East, consider the possibility of a stop over in your journey, and try not have any big farewell parties several days before departure as two good nights sleep before you go is ideal. Don't organise to do too much on the first day after you arrive - especially avoid picking up a hire car and driving too far on the first day. The best cure for jet lag is rest. It may take up to 7 days to recover from a 10 - 12 hour time shift, especially if travelling east. When you arrive at the new time zone you will adapt faster if you try to do what the locals are doing. Your body uses certain clues to set its internal clock like; sunshine - often a walk in the sunshine on the morning after arrival stimulates the optic nerve and helps the pineal gland in your head reset the body clock - eating something at the new mealtimes help get the body back on track; sleeping at the current time-zone sleep times.

Melatonin - 'hormone of darkness' - is a hormone from the pineal gland in the brain which controls the body's eternal clock. Melatonin levels increase when it is dark outside and cause you to feel sleepy. Research has now shown that 5mg of melatonin, taken at the target bedtime e.g.10pm for 2-5 days after arrival, decreases jetlag especially after travelling eastward.

What is DVT and how can I prevent it?

Prolonged sitting leads to a blood clot (thrombosis) forming in the deep veins of the calf, upper leg or even pelvis - hence the term DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis). The symptoms of DVT range from nothing at all to a mild soreness or swelling in one leg. Serious problems occur when a clot breaks off and is swept via the circulation to the lungs - this is called a pulmonary embolism. If this clot is large, it can block the blood supply to the heart and be fatal. However, DVT is a very rare cause of death in travellers but even small clots can damage your lungs permanently and mean you have to take long term anti-clotting drugs, which can be very intrusive on your lifestyle and exercise tolerance. So what can you do?

How not to clot - think of it as W.A.L.C.

Water - Drink plenty of fluids

Activity - Exercise your legs and walk around the plane when possible. Exercise also helps prevent swollen feet and is especially important if you are pregnant.

Luggage – It must not press on the back of your legs. Remove bulky objects from your back pocket. Put a pillow in the small of your back. Crossing your legs interferes with the circulation and puts uneven strain on different parts of the body so minimise this if you can.

Compression stockings should be worn if prescribed, especially if you are over 50 years of age, or you have any increased risk of clotting.

Does flying increase your risk of catching the flu?

Medical research has dispelled another myth - as long as the plane has the air-conditioning running, your risk of catching respiratory germs is no higher than at your local shopping centre. Most planes have 15-20 air exchanges per hour. The airport is a greater risk – one percent of travellers catch influenza so a flu vaccine may be recommended for your trip.

As a pioneer within the field, Dr Deborah Mills of Dr Deb’s Travel Health Care, has practiced in travel medicine for 20 years. She is also the author of Australia’s most popular medical travel book ‘Travelling Well’ which is in its fourteenth edition and has 125,000 copies in print.

For more great travel information and resources visit www.drdeb.com.au

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