**Sit Back, Relax, and Enjoy the Flight**

Many travelers dread taking flights due to the various ailments such as air sickness, swelling in the legs, the discomfort of sitting in a cramped position, and/or eating that bland airline food. The combination of these issues and others can make the journey miserable for passengers.

However, a little preparation can go a long way in making your flight more enjoyable.

**Air Sickness**

The symptoms of air sickness can include dizziness, nausea, vomiting and cold sweats. In severe cases, it can be incapacitating

“To minimize the risk of experiencing these discomforts are to sit in the middle of the plane near the wings,” said Dr. Myles Druckman, Senior VP of Medical Services for International SOS. “There is less movement of the plane in these areas. Also try to focus on distant objects, such as the horizon, and to keep head movements to a minimum.”

In addition to this preventative advice, there are also several groups of medications that can help. An example of these is Scopolamine, which can last up to 3 days. It can cause drowsiness however; so many travelers prefer not to use it. Antihistamines can also be helpful. Their side effects include drowsiness, but this can be taken advantage of when using the medication at the correct time, like when trying to sleep during a flight.

“Keep in mind that all medications have side effects,” said Druckman. “Consult your physician regarding which one you should take, especially if you have special medical conditions.”

People with gastrointestinal or bladder problems, liver or kidney disease, and people who are at risk of acute-angle glaucoma should seek medical advice before taking any of these medications.

**Dry Air**

Did you know that passengers can lose liters of fluid during a flight solely due to the dry air in the cabin of a plane? This dehydration can easily cause skin, especially lips, to become dry, itchy, and irritated. Here are a few tools to help dry skin related issues:

* Bring a moisturizer on board and apply it often to hands, face, and other skin that feels dry. But be sure to check airline regulations first - many countries only allow liquid/gel items to be carried on if they are under a certain weight or volume.
* Use lip balm for chapped lips.
* If you decide to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer during your flight, choose a product that also contains moisturizers.
* Stick to drinking water versus tea, coffee, and alcohol, as they increase dehydration.

**Going Up and Down**

The average jet cruises at a height of 35,000 to 40,000 feet. At that altitude, the air pressure in the cabin is much lower than it is on the ground. During ascent, there is a serious reduction of air pressure in your body and can cause your body to expand and your legs to swell.

“Taking a walk around the cabin is an effective way to restore circulation and reduce your body’s swelling during the flight,” said Druckman. “Also, be sure to drink plenty of fluids as it is said to reduce the chances of developing deep vein thrombosis.”

Have you ever experienced that painful sensation in your ear during the descent of your flight? This is due to the increased cabin pressure while your plane is landing. The air trapped in your middle ear however, is still quite low. This can cause ear pain and damage if the pressures are unable to equalize. Try these exercises to help your body adjust:

* Wiggle your jaw;
* Chew on something such as gum;
* Yawn;
* If the other options do not work, pinch your nose closed, close your mouth and blow *gently*. Remember to do this often and before experiencing pain.

Reconsider flying if you have a serious head cold. You may not be able to equalize the pressure in your ears during ascent or descent. If you develop severe ear pain while flying, ask the on board staff for help and see your doctor before flying again.

Disclaimer: This information has been developed for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Should you have questions or concerns about any topic described here, please consult your healthcare professional.

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