

The Sanest Stay-Healthy Travel Advice

Take these real, not-a-crazy-person strategies with you on your next journey and remain in fine form from liftoff to landing and beyond. BY LIZ KRIEGER

YOUR BODY AT 30,000 FEET

There are legit reasons why you feel out of sorts during a flight.

Your head throbs. The air up there is decidedly drier and contains less oxygen than the air on land, which can leave you dehydrated and headachy, says Christopher Sanford, M.D., a professor of family medicine at the University of Washington.

Your skin is dry. Our skin is used to a humidity level of at least 30 percent, says New York City dermatologist Rachel Nazarian, but in planes it's usually less than 20 percent. In the window seat? You'll be exposed to increased ultraviolet radiation and oxidative stress. "Wear SPF and double up on antioxidants, like a free-radical-neutralizing serum and green tea."

Your feet are swollen. Being confined to seat 23A for hours at a time can lead to major swelling or, worse, potentially life-threatening blood clots, which are more likely to happen on a flight over six hours, says Sanford. A lap up and down the aisle every hour will keep blood flowing.

Your ears hurt. Blame the pressurized air. To keep your ears from popping during takeoff and landing, suck on a candy instead of chewing gum, says Sandra Fryhofer, M.D., an internist in Atlanta. Most sugar-free gums contain sugar alcohols, which can cause gas, cramping, or bloating.

THREE NO-EXCUSES EXERCISES YOU CAN DO ANYWHERE

Considering taking a break from your workouts while on the road? Think again. A recent study has found that just two weeks of sudden inactivity can hamper your blood-sugar levels. Even short workouts can keep this at bay. These three moves target your entire body, says New York City-based wellness expert David Kirsch.

1. Plié Toe Squats

Start with feet wider than shoulder-width apart and turned out at a 45-degree angle, with hands on hips. As you squat down, simultaneously lift your heels as high as you can. Return to starting position. Repeat 15 times.



2. Planks

Start in a push-up position with your hands shoulder-width apart. Keep arms directly below shoulders, feet hip-width apart, and your body in a straight line from head to feet. Hold this position for as long as possible.



3. Push-ups

Start on the ground with hands shoulder-width apart and feet directly behind you. Keeping your back level and core engaged, lower your body to the ground until your arms are at a 90-degree angle. Return to starting position; repeat as many times as you can.



CALM YOUR FLIGHT FEARS

There's a better way than white-knuckling it through turbulence.

Use your diaphragm. "Short, shallow breathing makes you feel panicky," says Melanie Greenberg, Ph.D., clinical psychologist and author of *The Stress-Proof Brain*. She suggests trying this instead: Inhale for four counts, imagining you're blowing up a balloon in your belly. Pause for two. Then exhale for four, as if blowing out candles. "This puts the brakes on the fight-or-flight response."

Talk yourself down. Try an affirmation like "Right now I am safe," says Greenberg. "It reminds you that nothing bad is actually happening in the present."

Label each and every worry. Whenever you find yourself in a spiral and thinking, *The plane's going to crash*, call it out as a fearful thought. "It causes you to refocus: You become an observer of your thoughts as opposed to being your thoughts," says Greenberg. By concentrating on the process, you're distancing yourself from all the emotions attached to *I'm scared*.





BE A GERM FREAK ON THE PLANE

Sterilize your seating area. Those cleaning crews typically don't have time to sanitize thoroughly, and norovirus and cold and flu viruses can live for several hours on surfaces. Using disinfecting wipes, swab armrests, seat-belt buckles, and the tray table (which one study found to be teeming with 10 times more germs than your own toilet seat!).

Wash hands better. As in: Scrub with soap for 20 seconds. Or use a hand sanitizer that's 60 percent alcohol. Security-line bins, in particular, have been proven to be hotbeds for germs.

Snag the window seat. Scientists recently discovered that those who sit on the aisle are exposed to more people and therefore potentially more germs than those in other spots.

Cover up. A cough or sneeze can send droplets up to 26 feet away, which means that even if you're rows away from the dude who won't cover his achoo, his germs may be headed for you. In lieu of being the weirdo in the surgical mask, wrap a scarf over your nose, or hide out under a hoodie.

SMART SWAPS FOR THE PLANE

Glasses, NOT contacts: Contacts dry out eyes and make them vulnerable to microbes.

Socks and shoes, NOT sandals: You never know what's lurking on the ground at security (parasite? fungus?), so protect your feet.

Trail mix, NOT salted nuts: Salty foods can contribute to swelling. Much better to BYO snack, sans salt.

Flat, NOT fizzy: The bubbles in your choice of on-board beverage can add to sky-high GI issues and bloating.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY... ABROAD

Print your info to carry with you in case you're in a bind and have spotty Wi-Fi.

Life happens, and so does illness or injury while far away from home. John Gobbels, vice president and chief operating officer for Medjet, a global medical air transport service, recommends this pre-trip prep.

1. Compile your medical info. Write down any medical considerations should you need aid but can't speak for yourself.
2. Get the 411 on the country's "911." Most countries have their own emergency numbers. Obtain details on the U.S. embassy, too.
3. Find the closest hospital. Search locations near your Airbnb on the website for the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (iamat.org), and learn about any potential health threats common to where you're heading.



GET YOUR ZZZ'S ...

Before the trip: Being well rested pre-travel will keep you healthier once you hit the road, says Sanford. One study found that people who slept less than seven hours per night over two weeks were three times more likely to catch a cold than those who got at least eight.

During the trip: If a time change is going to mess with you, consider taking melatonin to attune with the new time zone, says Fryhofer. Natural daylight readjusts your circadian rhythm as well.

ABH: ALWAYS BE HYDRATING

Drink a lot of water in flight. And more than you think: "Aim for at least four ounces per hour," says Fryhofer. This one small thing can counteract most negative effects of flying.

Resist those mini bottles of booze. Alcohol is dehydrating, says Sanford. Besides, research shows while it may help you doze off, you'll likely sleep poorly.

Bypass coffee or caffeinated tea, too. Especially if it's brewed on board. A 2015 study on aircraft water quality found that the water tanks can be "conductive for microbial growth."

Moisten eyes and nose. The drier mucous membranes are, the more germs can sneak by, says Nazarian. Apply wetting drops to eyes and nasal spray or a dab of Aquaphor to each nostril once an hour while flying.



WHAT'S BEHIND YOUR BOTTOM-LINE PROBLEM?

If planes, trains, and automobiles leave you with a backup on the turnpike, so to speak, you're not alone. Sitting still for long periods can slow down your digestive tract, says Christopher South, M.D., a gastroenterologist at the Ohio Gastroenterology and Liver Institute in Cincinnati. Get things moving by walking around, taking a fiber supplement, and drinking water.

On the other hand, they don't call it traveler's diarrhea for nothing. You're exposed to new germs and food, and in developing countries, a sip of contaminated water can leave you doubled over. Rely on pasteurized beverages and bottled water—even for brushing teeth and washing produce—and avoid ice, says South. Be sure street-stall food has been cooked thoroughly.