

# Sleep

## Sleep tips for jet lag

Every day, millions of travellers struggle against one of the most common sleep disorders – jet lag.

Studies have shown that the condition actually results from an imbalance in our body's natural 'biological clock' caused by travelling to different time zones.



### **What time do you go to bed?**

When travelling to a new time zone, our circadian rhythms are slow to adjust and remain on their original biological schedule for several days. This results in our bodies telling us it's time to sleep, when it's actually the middle of the afternoon, or it makes us want to stay awake when it's late at night.

### **Try these to help minimise some of the side effects of jet lag:**

**Select a flight that allows early evening arrival and stay up until 10 p.m. local time.** If you must sleep during the day, sleep for no longer than two hours.

**Go to bed earlier** several days prior to a journey eastward and later for a westward trip.

**Upon boarding the plane,** change your watch to the destination time zone.

**Alcohol, tea and coffee disrupt sleep,** so avoid alcohol and caffeine as much as possible on the flight, and drink plenty of water or fruit juice to reduce dehydration and fatigue

**Wear comfortable shoes and clothes** for travelling, and get up and walk around during the flight to reduce the risk of thrombosis. Blood clots in the legs can be a complication of long-haul flights.

**Upon arrival at a destination,** avoid heavy meals and any heavy exercise close to bedtime. Try to get outside in the sunlight whenever possible. Daylight is a powerful stimulant for regulating the biological clock.

**Allow time in holiday or business plans to sleep in** on the first one or two mornings to let your body adjust. This may be time well invested, as mistaken judgement due to fatigue could be more costly.

There are a number of 'remedies' available that supposedly combat jet lag. There is little evidence to prove whether or not they are effective. The most commonly named one is Melatonin, but many countries, including the UK, concerned at possible problems from its use, have made it a prescription-only drug. However, your doctor is unlikely to be willing or able to prescribe it.

If you are concerned about your sleep, you may find it useful to discuss it with your doctor.

