



Do's and Don'ts of Avoiding Jet Lag

Most issues will be associated with the length of one's flight or with a difference in climate, culture or diet. However, the world has 24 time zones, and how many you cross — and in what direction — can matter when it comes to getting a good night's sleep.

Flying east seems to be the most problematic, because you "lose" time. International flights of eight hours can easily throw off sleep, bathroom schedules and other daily routines.

Flying west, you "gain" time and your body can usually adjust more readily, but there still will be changes to your rhythmic schedule.

Regardless of which direction you fly, three seems to be the magic number of time zones to cross before your ability to sleep is more likely affected.

Here are a few of the best tips for ensuring that you sleep like a baby, you wake up refreshed, and your body stays in sync with night and day activities.

Do: Stay in shape. This is definitely part of a pre- and post-travel regimen. Everything your mother told you about exercise is true.

Do: Adjust your schedule before you leave. If traveling east, try sleeping and waking up earlier, and make an effort to get out into the early-morning sun. If traveling west, try to get at least an hour's worth of sunlight as soon as possible after reaching your destination.

Do: When you board your flight, adjust your watch to the local time in your destination. Sleep on the airplane at the same time you would at your destination. Adapt to the local schedule when you arrive. Sunlight helps inhibit melatonin production during the day. If you arrive during the day, don't sleep until the evening at your regular bedtime.

Don't: Drink alcohol the day before, the day of, or the day after your flight. It can cause dehydration, disrupt sleeping schedules, and trigger nausea and general discomfort. Also, don't consume dehydrating caffeine before, during, or just after the flight. It can disrupt sleeping and heighten anxiety.

Do: Hydrate. Drink plenty of water, especially during the flight, to counteract the effects of the dry atmosphere inside the plane.

Do: Get up and move around on the plane, and move in your seat. Exercise your legs and arms in all directions at regular intervals. Walk around at least every two or three hours.

Do: Choose comfort over style. Wear loose, comfortable clothes that are destination-appropriate and will accommodate any swelling without chafing (peripheral edema, or swelling of the legs and feet, is a common occurrence during long flights).