

Travel Tips to Stay Healthy

Last year, almost three billion people boarded airplanes for business and leisure travel – that’s a lot of bodies flying around the world!

So here are some tips on how to stay well, both in the air and on the ground.

Five tips for healthy air travel

1. **Hydrate.** Airplane cabins are typically dry, so you’ll want to drink lots of water and non-alcoholic drinks. Save the glass of wine for when you’re on the ground, because the effects of alcohol are intensified at 30,000 feet. It’s no way to start a holiday.
2. **Move, move, move!** You’re going on a trip, not to jail, so there’s no reason to feel like a prisoner in your seat. On flights longer than four hours, especially, you’ll want to move around every hour or so to prevent everything from a stiff back and a numb bum to the more serious concern of deep venous thrombosis (a serious form of blood clot), which can result from prolonged immobility.
3. **Choose your seat wisely.** Whether you need a window seat to rest your head so you can sleep, or an aisle seat so you can come and go more easily, the less stressed you are during the flight, the better for your health. [Seatguru](#) is a great resource that shows you every plane’s layout and gives you tips on which seats to avoid (such as those non-reclining ones near the washrooms).
4. **Comfort is key.** Pointy stilettos are not your friends in the air, and neither are those super-stylish tight jeans. Low pressure in the cabin makes for swollen tootsies, and since many of us like to take off our shoes during those long-haul flights, you will not want to squeeze your puffy feet into tight shoes after eight hours on a plane. Ditto for tight clothing. Choose something that moves with you, not against you.
5. **Bring anti-bacterial wipes.** I don’t want to scare you with flight attendant horror stories, but let’s just say that the cleaners might not always do a hospital-approved disinfection every time they refresh your plane. Tray tables can always benefit from that anti-bacterial wipe, and you might want to avoid stashing anything in that seat pocket in front of you. (It’s where they put the air sickness bags, remember?)

Ahhh! You’ve arrived, safe and sound. Now, how do you stay that way?

Five tips for staying healthy on the ground

1. **Get your shots.** This isn’t just for the adventurous trekker into the mosquito-infested jungles of Borneo. Some types of hepatitis, for example, can hit you at even the swankiest hotel, so it’s a good idea to talk to a travel clinic about the shots they recommend for your destination. Do it well in advance of your trip so you have the time to watch out for any side effects and/or get the correct number of doses. For example, the hepatitis A and B combined vaccination requires multiple injections, several weeks apart, so don’t wait till the last minute to roll up your sleeve.

2. **BYOM (bring your own meds).** Of course you'll take along any of your own usual prescriptions, but also think about bringing a note from your doctor that explains what each medication is, to avoid any problems at border crossings. Keep a record of your prescriptions with you in a couple of places (in digital form on your phone, on paper in your suitcase) in case your medications get lost or stolen. Along with your prescription drugs, bring along some diarrhea or allergy preventives and remedies, since unfamiliar foods or water can be a problem for your system. When in doubt, do what the Canadian government's [Well on Your Way](#) brochure recommends when it comes to food in a foreign country: "Boil it, cook it, peel it or leave it."
3. **Drive safely.** Year after year, road accidents are the leading cause of death for tourists. Lack of familiarity with the roads, driving on the unaccustomed side of the road, poor road surfaces and travel fatigue all contribute to car crashes, so if you choose to get behind the wheel abroad, take your driving even more seriously than you do at home.
4. **Know your limit, travel within it.** If you've never gone hiking in your life, high-altitude climbing at Machu Picchu is probably not the place to start. Just because you're up for an adventure doesn't mean your body is, and that makes you more likely to suffer an injury. If you have your heart set on a particular activity, start preparing for it physically well before you get on the plane.
5. **Protect yourself with travel insurance.** This should be a given, because if you don't follow any of tips one through four (and sometimes even if you do!), you're going to want to know you're covered, medically and financially.

Whether you're on the plane, or you've set foot on the ground at your dream destination, a little planning goes a long way to making your trip one that you'll remember forever – for all the right reasons.

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