

## JETLAG

Jetlag occurs when your body's usual sleeping and waking cycle is altered by crossing several time zones, especially if there is a time change of more than 5 hours. The body gets confused with time shifts causing mental and physical exhaustion. The effect of jetlag is compounded by both physical and mental activities before, during and after the flight. Severity and recovery time will vary greatly between individuals. For many people, jetlag is more than just an inconvenience, particularly business travellers and sports people who must be physically or mentally fit when they reach their destinations.

### SYMPTOMS

Sleep disturbance, fatigue, disorientation, anxiety and insomnia

Lack of concentration, confusion, mental exhaustion and impaired physical ability

Loss of appetite, irritability, headaches, joint stiffness and bowel irregularities

Motion sickness, stress and dehydration are similar to those of jetlag and can make jetlag worse.



### PREVENTION

#### PRE- FLIGHT

- ✓ Select flights that will minimise sleep deprivation.
- ✓ Plan a stop over arriving late afternoon or early evening if possible.
- ✓ Avoid last minute hectic activities before flights.



#### IN-FLIGHT

- ✓ Make yourself comfortable – wear loose unrestrictive clothing, slip off shoes.
- ✓ If possible choose seats away from toilets and galley.
- ✓ Keep well hydrated – drink plenty of water and juices.
- ✓ Avoid overeating, caffeine and alcohol.
- ✓ Move during the flight and get off and walk at stopovers.
- ✓ Make yourself feel better – clean your teeth, wash your face, change clothes before getting off the plane.
- ✓ Set watch to your destination time and eat and sleep according to this.
- ✓ Take a short acting sedative to help you sleep.

#### POST-FLIGHT

- ✓ Adopt local time immediately.
- ✓ Stay awake until bedtime according to your destination time frame.
- ✓ Try and get a good night's sleep on the first night – initially it may be worthwhile taking a sleeping tablet to help you sleep. A hot bath or some exercise may also get you in the mood for sleep.
- ✓ If you suffer insomnia read or watch TV, but not in bed. Don't lie down until tired.
- ✓ Get up early on the first morning and the same time every morning regardless of how much sleep you've had.
- ✓ If arriving during the day, spend some time outdoors and have a short walk as sunlight and moderate exercise helps you adjust more quickly to the new time zone.
- ✓ Avoid naps until fully adjusted to the new time. Naps confuse the body with night sleep.
- ✓ A quick "boost me up" is using peppermint oil in hot water (steam inhalation) or mix it with a base oil to massage into the temples.
- ✓ Avoid doing too much for the first two days. Delay important activities like sporting competitions or active business meetings.

### RECOVERY

It can take a number of days to recover from jetlag. Westward travel is usually better tolerated than eastward travel. Recovery normally takes a day for each time zone crossed. For the 7-11 hour time shift encountered between the UK and Australia it may take three days to a week to fully adjust to the new time zone

### TREATMENT

There is no quick cure for jetlag. Taking preventative measures will assist with recovery.

**Melatonin** is a naturally occurring hormone that is thought to regulate sleep and body rhythms. Most melatonin preparations are synthetic. Melatonin preparations are available in some overseas countries, though not currently in Australia. In some people melatonin can trigger sleep and help re-synchronise the body's natural rhythm to the new time zone. Optimal dosage and timing is still unclear for this medication, and it could make you drowsy during waking hours. Avoid activities such as driving, piloting an aircraft and operating machinery.