**Handy Tips to Minimise the Effects of Jetlag**

**What is Jetlag?**

Jetlag is a set of symptoms related to travel, which are provoked by the mismatch between a person’s established circadian rhythm (24-hour body clock) and the time of day in a new time zone. Symptoms vary between individuals but include poor sleep quality and timing (difficulty getting to sleep / early morning wakening), irritability, fatigue, headache and low mood, gastrointestinal disturbance and poor performance in physical and mental tasks.

Jetlag is more likely to occur in travellers crossing multiple time zones.

Jetlag is compounded by travel fatigue, which results from irregular meal and sleep times, reduced physical activity, dehydration, relatively lower oxygen levels in the cabin and many other factors associated with long-haul travel.

**What can I do to minimise the effects of Jetlag?**

There is no magic wand to prevent jet lag, but there are a few strategies that may help reduce the effects.

**Before Travel**

* Get a good night’s sleep before you go
* You may choose to begin to reset your body clock a few days before you leave
* For eastwards travel, aim to sleep 1-2 hours earlier than usual and aim for exposure to bright light early in the morning
* For westwards travel, aim to sleep 1-2 hours later, with bright light exposure in the evening, if possible

**During Travel**

* Set your watch to the time-zone of your destination and, depending on the timing of your flight, aim to sleep during what will be night-time hours at your destination
* Keep yourself as comfortable as possible; choose business or first class if financially possible
* Keep well hydrated and mobilise regularly
* Ideally, avoid alcohol, as this may worsen the effects of jet lag
* Avoid too much caffeine, as this may contribute to dehydration and act as a stimulant
* Short-acting sleeping tablets may be an option for certain travellers to promote sleep at appropriate times during travel, depending on the circumstances. However, they may increase immobility associated with Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) risk. Individual risks and benefits should be discussed with your doctor.

**On Arrival**

* If your trip is short, < 48-72 hours long, you may wish to consider staying on your home time. Schedule business or important meetings at times when you may be most alert, for example the local morning if you have travelled westwards or the local afternoon or evening if you have travelled east.
* Short naps may be appropriate if you are sleep-deprived after a flight. Daytime naps should be as short as possible (ideally 20-30 minutes) so as not to affect night-time sleep.
* Caffeine may be strategically used to increase daytime alertness, but should be avoided after midday.
* Light meals during the daytime may be less likely to provoke fatigue than heavy, carbohydrate-rich meals, but there is no evidence regarding the best foods to eat to minimise jetlag.
* Be prepared for changes in your sleep pattern: if you are travelling east, you may have trouble staying asleep until your body clock has adjusted; if travelling west, you may have trouble falling asleep.
* Consider light exposure +/- medication for optimal adjustment

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| **Exposure to light**The solar light-dark cycle is fundamental to our body clock. Exposure to natural light at your destination may be most important in helping to re-set your rhythm. Eastward travellers should seek out bright light in the morning and westward travellers, in the evening. For travellers crossing 8 or more time zones, the situation may be a little more complex and for help in seeking light at the optimal times, see the below web resources. |

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| **Medications** There are two types of medication which may help reduce the effects of jetlag; you may wish to discuss these with your doctor.***Melatonin*** is a ‘sleep hormone’, made by the pineal gland in the human body, which influences our sleep-wake cycle and has been shown to reduce the effects of jetlag. The effect seems strongest for people crossing 5 or more time zones. Immediate release tablets are the most effective in reducing symptoms, at doses of between 0.5 and 5 mg. Optimal timing for taking melatonin is important. When travelling east, to promote shifting of the body clock to an earlier time, melatonin should be taken at bedtime for 3-4 nights or until local adaptation has occurred. When travelling west, it may be better to take a small dose during the second half of the night, until you have adapted to local time. It is not recommended to start taking melatonin prior to departure.‘Hypnotics’ or ***sleeping tablets***, e.g. zopiclone and temazepam, may be useful in improving sleep, particularly if it is at a time when you would usually be awake at home. If your doctor deems it appropriate, they may be used sparingly, for a few nights, to help re-set your sleep cycle. Some sleeping tablets may cause a ‘hangover’ effect and they should therefore not be taken prior to activities such as driving, scuba diving or operating technical equipment.  |

**Useful Websites**

<http://www.caa.co.uk/Passengers/Before-you-fly/Am-I-fit-to-fly/Health-information-for-passengers/Jet-lag/> - This site has useful information, including a table with recommended times for exposure or avoidance of daylight.

For help with planning your sleep schedule whilst travelling or on arrival, <https://www.jetlagrooster.com/> formulates a personalised sleep / light exposure plan, according to your travel schedule.

[www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html) is a useful tool for world time zone travel information.

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2020/travel-by-air-land-sea/jet-lag>