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Jet Lag Hurts Both Mental and Physical Performance

By Dr. Mercola | February 23rd, 2017

Jet lag, also known as flight fatigue, time zone change syndrome or desynchronization, occurs when travel across time zones disrupts your internal body clock, resulting in mental, emotional and physical symptoms such as:

- Daytime sleepiness and lethargy followed by nighttime insomnia
- Anxiety, irritability, confusion and poor concentration
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Headache, nausea, indigestion, dehydration and/or general malaise

Helpful Tips to Minimize Jet Lag

As a general rule, your body will adjust to the time zone change at a rate of one time zone per day. To prevent athletic deterioration due to jet lag, Allada suggests baseball teams may want to make sure their starting pitchers are on location a day or two earlier when cross-country travel is required.

This would allow their internal body clocks to adjust to the local time zone, allowing them to perform at their best. Other athletes would be wise to follow the same advice — especially if you're traveling eastward, which tends to desynchronize your internal clock more severely than westward travel.

If you cannot squeeze in an extra day or two, you could fake it by pretending you're in your destination time zone while still at home.

This suggestion may be particularly helpful if you're traveling with young ones. It's hard to rest and recuperate when you have one or more bright-eyed and bushy-tailed children rearing to go at 4 a.m. once you reach your destination.

To do this, simply wake up and go to bed according to the destination time rather than your local time. In the morning, be sure to expose yourself to bright full-spectrum light. If the sun is not yet up, use a clear incandescent light bulb along with a cool-blue spectrum LED to shut down melatonin production.

As an example, if you were to travel from New York to Paris, start going to bed an hour earlier each day, three days ahead of your flight, and avoid bright light for two to three hours before going to bed.

This may necessitate closing the blinds or shades, and turning off all lights and electronic screens. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine. When you wake, be sure to get some bright sunlight exposure.

If it's still dark out, use a light box or the artificial light combination mentioned above. Also be sure to shift your mealtimes accordingly.

Wear your blue-blocking glasses on the plane if you are traveling at night and continue wearing them until you get to bed. The excess blue light without the balanced red and near-infrared will seriously impair your melatonin production.

Once you get to your destination, it is best to get up close to sunrise and go outside and look in the direction of the sun. You can safely do this for about an hour after sunrise.

This will help to reset your melatonin production. If weather and circumstances allow, it would be best to do this outdoors with your bare feet on the ground.

Ancient Trick to Eliminate Jet Lag

- 1.** The day of your trip, set your clock to match the local time at your destination (depending on the time of your flight, you may have to do this a day ahead)
- 2.** At 11 a.m. (the local time at your destination), stroke your heart meridian three times on the left and three times on the right. Your heart meridian begins just to the outer side of your nipple, up through your armpit and down the ulnar aspect (inner side) of your arm, down the outside of your pinky. Once you reach the end of your pinky, gently press into the base of the fingernail (heart point in Traditional Chinese Medicine).
- 3.** At noon, repeat the heart meridian strokes

Before and after boarding the plane, take a high-quality, broad-spectrum antioxidant. Astaxanthin may be an ideal choice, as it also helps shield against cosmic radiation exposure, provided you've been taking it for at least three days ahead of time.

Once you reach your destination, take a fast-acting sublingual melatonin along with a slow-release oral melatonin around 10 p.m. (or just before bedtime if you go to bed earlier). Keep in mind that only a very small dose is required — typically 0.25 mg or 0.5 mg to start with, and you can adjust it up from there.

Taking higher doses, such as 3 mg, can sometimes make you more wakeful instead of

sleepier, so adjust your dose carefully. Also be sure to stay well-hydrated, whether you're flying or driving to your destination. Your brain controls sleep and it functions best when fully hydrated.