

# Frequent flyer? Bon Voyage!

According to ayurveda frequent air travel can cause your vata to go out of balance. Geeta Vara shares tips on how to keep a check on it.

ARE YOU A BUSY executive who needs to travel frequently or is it just wanderlust?

Although it can be fun and exciting, frequent and lengthy travel can disturb our bio-energetic forces, known in ayurveda as the three doshas—*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*. Air travel, in particular, can drive our vata soaring. What's vata you ask? Well it's the dosha that governs all movement in the body and mind and is predominantly composed of ether and air qualities. Vata's characteristics are dry, changeable, irregular and light. Since the activity of air travel has similar qualities, it hampers the vata balance.

Knowing what your ayurvedic body type is can help to reduce the negative health effects of travel and also make your experience more pleasurable.

## Adverse effects of air travel

When we travel by air, the dry, re-circulated in-flight air, increased cabin pressure and high altitude add to our already disturbed diet and lifestyle routine. Coupled with time zone changes and disconnection to earth, air travel can leave our bodies feeling quite out of sorts. Air travel can leave people with:

- » Excessive sleepiness
- » Inability to focus
- » Headaches
- » Feelings of nausea and dizziness
- » Muscular joint aches
- » Indigestion and constipation
- » Dehydrated/dry and blemished skin

Those individuals with a 'vata' dominant constitution or those who have always been

used to [or have a preference for] a rigid routine are likely to be the most affected by jetlag. Here are some simple vata pacifying tips:

## Before travel

Before you travel, treat yourself to a hot oil *abhyanga* massage to lock in moisture in the deeper skin layers. This is a fantastic antidote for aggravated vata since it has warmth and lubricating qualities that counterbalance the dry and windy elements of vata. You can always do a self-massage at home or even in your hotel room! If your hotel has a spa that offers ayurvedic massages, get one before you take your flight to the next destination.

Digestion can be sensitive around the time of travelling. Besides, meals are often scheduled according to the time of the destination so if you do eat on board go for a light, easy to digest and small portion, opt out of eating breads and cold foods. If you are not feeling hungry, avoid the meals altogether to prevent the digestive fire being disturbed. Preventing toxin accumulation will ensure the jetlag is more manageable.

A few days before travel, eat meals with plenty of proteins and healthy oils. Foods such as warm cooked whole grains, root vegetables, ghee and digestive herbs such as cumin, coriander, ginger and turmeric are all good choices. How about soups, stews, hot pots, kitchari, *dals* and rice to set you up for your journey? Pack a few healthy snacks such as nuts and other dry fruits for the trip. Avoid salads, frozen foods, dry snacks, and ice in drinks—these aggravate vata. Most airlines would be happy to prepare a special meal for you if you tell them your dietary preferences in advance.

## During the flight

Sleeping pills? Never! Have *Chyawanprash* to assist your digestion as well as give you an immune boost for the increased exposure to germs. *Ashwagandha*, a rejuvenating ayurvedic herb, can further boost your immunity and help you rest deeply on the flight. *Triphala* can help balance your bowels as well as provide an anti-oxidant boost as it contains lots of vitamin C. A great aid to prevent constipated bowels. If your digestive fire [*agni*] is disturbed, opt for *trikatu*—a great aid for poor



digestion, colds and congestion. Sleep, relaxing music and meditation are great for balancing vata before, during and after air travel. Try hot milk with some warming spices such as cardamom and nutmeg.

On the flight itself, avoid those dry, salty snacks they serve, as well as caffeine, carbonated and alcoholic drinks as these can further dehydrate you. Drink a small glass of water every hour and carry with you some herbal tea bags on board if you can't get hold of fresh ginger—just ask for hot water! Staying hydrated on a flight is essential.

With the body fighting to stay warm in the blasting air conditioning on aircrafts, our health is further hindered by cold food and drinks. However, we are aided by warming food and drinks. Warm water will ensure that our *agni* does not get disturbed. Excessive cold water on our *agni* quite simply can put it out. Ginger is a great antidote for other travel-related issues such as headaches and nausea. Try the crystallised variety for convenience.

Exercise your limbs by walking and stretching; this will ensure that your *prana* stays circulating throughout the body during the flight. It will also help prevent deep vein thrombosis [DVT].

Air travel can cause imbalance at every level, especially of the senses. Avoid excess stimulation of the eyes so that they don't become dry and give them plenty of rest even if you do not go to sleep. Protect the ears by putting a drop of warm cured sesame oil and place cotton wool to cover. Apply sesame oil to the nasal passages to protect the membranes from airborne bacteria. Spend time periodically taking deep breaths to calm and balance the nervous system and mind. If you are planning to carry edible items or fluids, check with your airline whether these would be allowed in your carry-on baggage.

## Post-flight Care

Once you arrive at your destination, adjust to the local time and sleep when it is the natural bed time with some leeway for your body to fully rest so that your body clock can reset quickly.

Ensure your first meal consists of light, easy to digest foods just like you had before your flight. You should stay balanced with these simple tips. Bon Voyage!

During your flight, avoid caffeine, carbonated and alcoholic drinks as these are known to dehydrate



Geeta Vara is a London-based Ayurvedic Practitioner, providing clients with personalised consultations, health coaching, bespoke treatments, corporate and private workshops. For more information visit: [www.geetavara.co.uk](http://www.geetavara.co.uk).