

Beat travel fatigue

Even short flights can make us feel lethargic, moody and foggy-headed. Here's how to land feeling relaxed and ready to go

If flying leaves you feeling the worse for wear and looking like something the cat dragged in, you're not alone. Travel fatigue is a very real problem for many people, no matter how short the flight. Here are some of the reasons why, and tips on how to beat the symptoms.

Decreased oxygen levels

The air pressure in airline cabins is generally kept low to accommodate the increase in altitude. According to Joelle Touchette Bradford, a naturopathic physician at the Integrated Medical Institute in Hong Kong, less pressure means that your body gets less oxygen per cubic litre. The result? Your brain feels like it's in a fog, you're tired and you find it hard to concentrate. Lower oxygen levels can also affect your mood,

causing you to feel irritable, adds Dr Low Chai Ling, medical director of The Sloane Clinic in Singapore.

At higher altitudes, just as the air around you expands, so does the air inside of you. Bradford says that expanding gasses can cause all kinds of unpleasant sensations, from congested sinuses and abdominal bloating to constipation.



Remedy: Bradford says breathing exercises can help bring more oxygen to the brain. Take a deep breath in, hold it for up to five seconds, breathe

out, and then hold your breath again for a couple of seconds. Repeat this exercise five times.

Dehydration

Dr Lily Wong, a general practitioner at The London Medical Clinic in Hong Kong, says that the humidity level on most aircraft can be as low as 20% – this is much lower than that on land. “(The low humidity) can dry out your eyes, nose, mouth and throat,” she explains.



“And when you're dehydrated, you also tend to feel lethargic.”

Combined with the low air pressure in the cabin, the low humidity level can also strip your

skin of moisture, making your complexion dry and rough, adds Dr Low.

If the climate at your destination is warmer than where you normally live, you will perspire more as your body acclimatises to the new environment. Loss of water and sodium can cause your body's electrolyte levels to go off-balance, leaving you feeling drained.

Remedy: During your flight, avoid alcohol,



coffee and tea, as these have a dehydrating effect on the body. To keep your skin moist, Dr Low says to drink plenty of water, wear minimal makeup (or skip it entirely) and apply a moisturiser with hydrating, nourishing



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ingredients like hyaluronic acid, squalane and aloe vera. Once you land, keep your water intake up, especially if you're arriving somewhere warm.

Decreased blood circulation

Sitting for hours at a time can affect your blood circulation and posture, says Bradford. Poor blood circulation increases swelling in your lower legs, ankles and feet, increasing your risk of the serious condition deep vein thrombosis. It also limits the amount of oxygen to your muscles, making you feel even more fatigued.

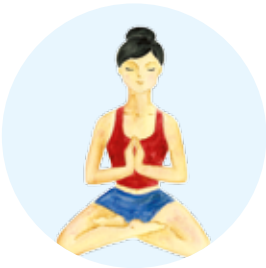


Remedy: While on-board, get your blood pumping with short walks up and down the aisle or with stretching exercises: rotate your ankles, do leg lifts if you have space, stretch your hamstrings (the muscles on the back of your thighs), and flex your toes and feet. Sip on ginger tea or nibble on a piece of crystallised ginger – Bradford says ginger has anti-spasmodic and anti-inflammatory properties that may reduce the effects of blood stagnation. When you land, a massage can ease your muscle aches and pains. »

Anxiety

Believe it or not, factors like flight delays, having to wait in line at the airport and worrying about getting to the gate on time can cause your anxiety levels to skyrocket, says Dr Wong. Stress and anxiety can make you feel emotionally exhausted when you land.

Remedy: Before your flight, get some light exercise as this will help you feel more relaxed on the plane. Also download some mindfulness or meditation podcasts to your phone to listen to once on board.



Air pollution

The air on-board is cleaner than the air outside, so once you step off the plane your body may feel the effects of the polluted air – especially if the pollution is worse at your destination than at home. “Air pollution can irritate the eyes, lungs and other mucous membranes



and can exacerbate pre-existing conditions like asthma, allergies or sinusitis,” says Bradford.

Dr Wong adds that when our lungs are congested, it can affect our uptake of oxygen, which can in turn cause fatigue and sleepiness and reduce mental sharpness.

Remedy: Bradford suggests taking a food-based vitamin C supplement to help your body cope with pollution. Vitamin C is an antioxidant that can process any toxic airborne particles. Alternatively, use a nasal saline rinse, which can help dislodge any airborne particulates that may have accumulated in the mucous membranes of your nasal passages. Use the rinse morning and evening when you’re in highly polluted areas.

Jetlag

This temporary sleep disorder applies only to

medium- and long-haul flights, which can disturb your body’s internal clock. Dr Wong says jetlag causes you to feel excessively drowsy and tired as your body tries to adjust to a different time zone. “Flying west to east has a greater effect on your body clock,” she adds. “Flying east to west increases the hours of daylight you experience, making the recovery from jetlag easier.”

Remedy: Dr Wong suggests adapting to your new time zone as soon as possible – so if you arrive early in the morning, try to stay up instead of sleeping the rest of the day away. Avoid drinking alcohol and caffeinated beverages in-flight – the former is dehydrating, which may increase tiredness, while the latter have a stimulating effect, making it difficult for you to fall asleep and affecting jetlag recovery time. ✈



The luxe remedy

These spa treatments are designed to refresh and rejuvenate your weary body and soul after a flight.

Jet Lag Treatment

The Excelsior Hong Kong, 281 Gloucester Rd, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong; mandarinoriental.com/excelsior

Feeling fuzzy-headed and sluggish? This 60-minute treatment relaxes your muscles and mind, ensuring that you’re back on your feet in no time. HK720 (S\$127).

Jet Lag Revival

Ikeda Spa, 6 Eu Tong Sen St, Clarke Quay Central #05-22; ikedaspa.com

Reset your natural body clock with this indulgent treatment based on Japanese massage techniques. It comprises a 30-minute Kiatsu head and scalp massage, a 60-minute Inyou relaxation massage and a 30-minute Ashitsuho thigh and calf massage. S\$248.

Power Nap Program

Devarana Spa, The Dusit Thani Building, 946 Rama IV Rd, Bangkok; devaranaspa.com

Landing at night? Prepare yourself for a good night’s sleep. This luxe two and a half hour treatment starts with a soothing lavender body scrub, followed by a relaxing hot milk bath and an aromatic lavender and camomile oil massage.

THB4,900 (S\$200).