

# The Wellness Express™

Jump on the train to good health

Issue 2, June 2013

## How to Stay Healthy While Traveling

Presented by:

### Introduction

Staying healthy while traveling can make a huge difference in your enjoyment of the experience. According to the World Health Organization, over 900 million international journeys are undertaken each year and this scale of global travel exposes travelers to a staggering variety of health risks.<sup>1</sup> But fear not. Being judicious about your health routine can help you avoid or overcome some of the most common problems that befall your fellow travelers. In this edition of the Wellness Express, we discuss several important ways that you can preserve your health while abroad. Your chiropractor has an intimate understanding of travel health issues and is a valuable resource for ensuring you maintain peak health and function while away from home.

### Minimize the Effects of Jet Lag

Jet lag is a common source of daytime fatigue and general discomfort for many travelers and it may cause gastrointestinal problems, reduced alertness, disturbed sleep, muscle soreness and menstrual symptoms in women. Time-zone travelers, especially flight crews, may experience even more severe health problems.

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A 2001 study published in the journal *Nature Neuroscience* reports that chronic jet lag impairs physiological and psychological health and induces stress.<sup>2</sup>



Jet lag affects almost everyone who skips time zones while traveling but there are several things you can do to help combat the undesirable symptoms of this common travel health complaint. The National Sleep Foundation recommends choosing a flight that arrives at your destination in the early evening, changing your watch to the destination time zone once you board your flight and avoiding heavy meals when arriving at your destination.<sup>3</sup> Avoiding heavy exercise and caffeine before bedtime is another helpful strategy, as both act as stimulants and can prevent sleep. Using earplugs and blindfolds can help eliminate any external stimuli that might keep you awake and spending as much time as possible in the daylight helps reset your biological clock.

### Exercise of the Week

#### Lumbar stabilization (stage 2) Plank Position

**Difficulty:** Moderate

*(Consult your Chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise)*

**Start:** Lie down on stomach. Then, begin by propping upper body up onto elbows/forearms, with hands together in prayer position. Engage inner abdominal muscles by bringing belly button inward. Keeping spine steady, lift hips and knees so you're resting on toes, creating a straight line from ankles to shoulders.

**Exercise:** Keeping spine steady, bend one leg to 90 degrees. Hold this position for 10-20 seconds. (Option 1) If this is relatively easy, try lifting leg higher, and hold this position for 10-20 seconds. (Option 2) Switch legs, and repeat. Perform 3-5 sets of this exercise per side. Be careful not to strain lower back.



## Maintain Healthy Dietary & Hydration Practices

It is almost inevitable that you will try new foods and dishes while traveling but staying true to certain general dietary principles can keep your immune system strong and healthy and you from getting sick. Consume a diet rich in nutrient-dense foods while avoiding junk foods, processed foods, sugar and other foods or substances that can tax your immune system. Taking a high-quality probiotic supplement - or boosting your consumption of fermented foods - may help prevent constipation - a health problem common among travelers. A simple piece of advice to avoid the opposite problem (diarrhea) is to avoid eating anything not thoroughly cooked or veggies washed with tap water.

Drinking a sufficient amount of water each day can help you stay healthy while traveling but you should consume only filtered, bottled, boiled or chemically treated water in countries where sanitation is poor, notes the National Health Service of the United Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Food and Drug Administration states that you should avoid drinking the various forms of tap water, including ice, water by the glass or in mixed drinks and water used when brushing your teeth.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly important in countries where the water supply may be contaminated with amoebas and other parasites.



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## Take Care of Your Feet

Foot blisters are a common problem for trekkers, shoppers and sightseers. These blisters can turn the trip of a lifetime into a miserable experience. Blisters are caused by friction from your shoes or clothing rubbing repeatedly against your skin, causing friction burns. Friction blisters form when the outer layer of your skin separates from the inner layer and the space between fills with lymph fluid. Using tape, moleskin, blister block, topical antiperspirants, baby powder and a shoe and boot dryer can all help prevent foot blisters. Having your feet professionally fitted for shoes or boots of proper length, width and volume can also help eliminate possible friction points.



## Practice Your Spine Care Routine

Practice your spine care routine - home exercises prescribed by your chiropractor - while traveling to help prevent back pain or keep it at bay. Uncomfortable sleeping positions on planes and trains, constant lugging of backpacks or suitcases and participation in new and strenuous physical activities can all place significant demands on your spine. Your chiropractor can show you what spine care exercises will be most helpful for you while traveling.

## Quote to Inspire

*"It is better to travel well than to arrive"*

*Buddha*

## References and Sources:

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