

Tips for Dealing With Jet Lag

Some of these strategies may help prevent or ease jet lag:

Simulate your new schedule before you leave.

"If you're traveling east, start moving your [bedtime](#) earlier," says Avelino Vercelles, MD, assistant professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and director of the school's sleep medicine fellowship. "Shift it a half-hour earlier each night for several nights before you leave."

If you're traveling west, do the opposite. You can also try moving your mealtimes closer to the time you'll be taking them at your destination.

Adapt to your new schedule while in flight.

Change your watch when you get on the plane. "This is mostly psychological," says Siebern, "but it helps you get into the mind-set of what you'll be doing in the place where you're going."

Try to sleep on the plane if it's nighttime where you're going or stay awake if it's daytime -- but don't force it. "It can be difficult to force yourself to sleep and that can cause frustration, which can then prevent sleep," says Siebern. "If that happens, just try to rest as much as possible."

Stay hydrated.

Drink water before, during, and after your flight to counteract [dehydration](#). Avoid alcohol or [caffeine](#) a few hours before you plan to sleep. Alcohol and [caffeine](#) can disrupt sleep and may cause [dehydration](#).

Consider melatonin.

[Melatonin](#) naturally secreted in our bodies helps regulate our circadian rhythms so that we sleep at night. But the jury is still out on the effectiveness of the supplement [melatonin](#) to combat jet lag and aid sleep. Some research shows that it can reduce jet lag on flights both east and west, but other research has not shown a benefit.

Vercelles suggests taking 3 milligrams of melatonin an hour or two before [bedtime](#) at your destination, and plan to sleep for 10 hours. "This takes into account the one or two hours needed to absorb the melatonin and allow it to enter the bloodstream, as well as 10 hours for sleep," Vercelles says. "Ten hours may be a generous overestimate, but it's better to allow more sleep time than less."

Melatonin appears to be safe if taken short term, but its long-term effects are not known. If you want to try melatonin, check with your doctor first.

Eat sensibly.

Some frequent fliers swear by jet lag diets -- such as eating a heavy diet for a few days before travel and [fasting](#) on flight day. No diets have been proven effective for preventing jet lag, however. "We do recommend not eating a high carb or fatty diet close to bedtime because that can be disruptive to sleep,"