- Jet lag

The clinic



WOMAN'S GP DR HELEN WALL ON HER TOPIC OF THE WEEK

8 foolproof ways to beat jet lag

Even a one-hour time difference can play havoc with your body and mind...

Heading abroad this summer? Jet lag is a temporary sleep disorder that occurs when your body's internal clock (known as circadian rhythm) is out of sync with the time zone you've travelled to. Our internal body clock regulates many of our essential body processes and hormone release, such as melatonin and cortisol. As a guide, you can expect your body to adjust by one time zone per day – that means for those of us going to Australia, it could take upwards of eight days. Fortunately, there are a few things you can do to help limit the effects.



SPOT THE SIGNS

Symptoms of jet lag can be debilitating and include fatigue and drowsiness during the day, an inability to sleep at night, irritability and low mood, poor concentration and memory, upset digestion and general fatigue.

1 **PREP AHEAD.** In the days leading up to your trip, try to move your sleep and wake times by 30-60 minutes towards your destination's time zone, to give your internal clock a head start.

2 **GET NATURAL LIGHT.** You may not feel like heading out in the daylight if you just want to climb into bed when you arrive, but sticking to the day/night pattern of where you've landed is the best approach. Getting natural light exposure, especially in the morning, can help reset your circadian rhythm.

3 **DITCH CAFFEINE AND BOOZE.** It's tempting to push back on the fatigue you're feeling by hitting the espressos, but caffeine (and alcohol) can send mixed messages to your body clock wherever you happen to be.

4 **HYDRATE.** It's super easy to become dehydrated during a flight. This will only add to your issues once the aeroplane lands. Drink plenty of water and limit dehydrating alcohol while travelling.

5 **NAP.** Taking short naps (20-30 minutes long) can boost alertness without interfering with night-time sleep. Avoid long snoozes that leave you groggy and delay adaptation by confusing your body more about what time of day it is.

6 **KEEP MOVING.** Regular movement helps circulation and can reduce post-flight sluggishness. Stretch, walk the aisles and do light exercises if possible.

7 **RESET YOUR WATCH.** Once you land (and even while in the air if possible), eat meals, sleep and engage in activities based on the local time, even if you're tired. This speeds up adjustment.

8 **SLEEP ON THE PLANE.** If your new time zones mean that it's night-time while you fly, take an eye mask, pillow and ear plugs to try to get some sleep on the plane so you can get a head start.

FACT OR FICTION? A SMEAR TEST IS ONLY FOR THOSE HAVING SEX

Fiction. Cervical cancer is linked to human papillomavirus (HPV) in most cases. However, HPV can be passed on through skin-to-skin contact, which includes vaginal and anal sex, but also oral sex, skin-to-skin genital contact and sharing sex toys.

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