

JET LAG

i Quick Facts:

Jet lag occurs when you quickly travel across two or more time zones. This long-distance travel causes your body to have trouble adjusting to a new schedule. You may feel sleepy during the day and have insomnia at night. Jet lag also can cause you to have trouble functioning. You may feel fatigued and struggle to concentrate.

KEY POINTS:

- **Jet lag can cause you to have trouble sleeping at night after a long trip.**
- **It also can cause you to feel sleepy or fatigued during the day.**
- **Jet lag affects some people more than others.**
- **There are several strategies to help you reduce jet lag symptoms.**



? How Can I Learn More?

- Talk to your board-certified sleep medicine physician.
- Visit www.sleepeducation.org

! Am I At Risk:

Pilots, flight attendants and business travelers are likely to have frequent jet lag symptoms. The more time zones you cross, the more severe your symptoms are likely to be. Some people can adjust more quickly than others to rapid shifts in time zones. Adjusting to a new time zone tends to be harder when you travel east than when you travel west. It is estimated that it takes one day per time zone that you cross for your body to adjust to the local time.

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

Jet lag is a circadian rhythm sleep-wake disorder. Circadian rhythms are biological processes that follow a daily cycle of about 24 hours. These internal rhythms are synchronized by time cues such as daylight and darkness. Circadian rhythms help regulate your sleep-wake schedule, causing you to feel sleepy at night and alert during the day.

Jet lag involves a temporary mismatch between the timing of your sleep-wake cycle and the time of day in your new time zone. It can cause you to feel sleepy and fatigued during the daytime. You also may have disturbed sleep at night. Jet lag also can impair your daytime functioning. You may have trouble concentrating or making decisions.

TREATMENTS:

There are several strategies that may help reduce jet lag symptoms. A sleep doctor can determine if any of these options are right for you:

Keeping your home schedule: A quick trip may not allow your body enough time to adapt to a new schedule. It may be more effective to maintain your home schedule during your trip.

Using bright light: Bright light is an important cue that can affect the timing of your circadian rhythms. For example, exposure to bright light in the morning may help advance your sleep-wake schedule before you travel east.

Adjusting your sleep schedule: You can help your body prepare for travel by adjusting your sleep schedule before your trip. For example, you can shift your sleep schedule earlier for a few nights before you travel east.

Taking melatonin: Melatonin is a hormone that helps regulate your sleep-wake cycle. Taking melatonin at bedtime for a few nights after your arrival may help you adjust to a new time zone.

Taking a sleeping pill: You may be able to fall asleep easier following a long trip by taking a sleeping pill at bedtime for a few nights.

Consuming caffeine: Caffeine may help improve alertness and reduce daytime symptoms of jet lag, but it also can disrupt your sleep at night.

TIPS:

- Get plenty of sleep during the nights before your trip.
- Avoid alcohol during your flight.
- After arrival try to spend time outside during daylight hours.
- Exercise daily before and after your trip.

➔ Next Steps:

- Make it a priority to sleep 7 or more hours nightly.
- Maintain a consistent sleep-wake schedule.
- Talk to your doctor about any ongoing sleep problems.
- Talk to a sleep doctor at an accredited sleep center if you need help preparing for a long trip.

Questions For Your Physician



Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

Sample Questions:



Why do I feel tired all the time?

Why do I wake up so early in the morning?



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