



Staying Healthy While Traveling

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Ah...finally. You made it to the airport on time, remembered to dress metal-free, wore slip-on shoes for security, and even reassembled yourself at the little conveyor belt without leaving anything behind. Enjoying your trip without health problems is the next step.

There are obvious benefits to travel, especially when we go for pleasure, but everyone has a story about where they were when they became sick and returned home without fully experiencing the place because of the illness that seized them. Even short car trips drag on with nausea and other digestive complaints, exhaustion, muscle cramps, and poor circulation. Starting with the most basic needs, and continuing to physically challenging travel, here are some tips to make your trip not only enjoyable, but safer.

Substantial information on international travel safety and guidelines can be found on the website for the World Health Organization. Please refer to it for your own knowledge and safety. www.who.int/ith/en/

The most important aspect of health while traveling is to keep your immune system strong, particularly within your respiratory and gastrointestinal tracts. Even when traveling to a different region of the same country, you are exposed to different bacteria, viruses, and irritating molds. The primary way to protect yourself against these is to take supplements that directly promote immune cell function. The stress of preparing for your trip (no matter how much you are looking forward to it), as well as the stress of traveling and possibly adapting to an entirely new environment, can add up enough to temporarily reduce your immune function. In addition, boost your non-specific immunity, such as maintaining the barrier protection

of your skin and digestive tract (starting with the mouth), and keeping the mucus in your respiratory tract flowing smoothly instead of becoming congested.

Prepare your body before you travel (start at least 2 weeks before take-off):

- Take beneficial flora, such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Lactobacillus bifidus*. Flora improve your intestinal immunity, helping with an easier transition when exposed to new microbes. They also aid in digestion and absorption of all types of food.
- Colostrum is supportive of the intestinal immune barrier to pathogens that often may be found in

spoiled food. High in immunoglobulins (antibodies), it compliments the immune protection offered by the flora, and can help to reduce diarrhea and spastic bowels.

- Nucleotides (Adenosine, cytidine, guanosine, and uridine) - are complex chemical structures that our cells use to make strands of RNA and DNA. Research with supplementation shows that they promote immune activity and reduced healing time from injury and surgery. This is an essential supplement for rigorous travel.¹⁴

- Eat the food of the area you are traveling to even before you travel. This allows your body to get used to digesting it. If you don't have the opportunity to do this, digestive enzymes will help you get acclimated. Whether it's a change in spices, types of oil, or amounts of food groups, the body needs time to adjust the amounts and types of enzymes it produces in order to digest the new food. Another benefit is that you will be able to impress people with your knowledge of new cuisines.

- To prevent swollen ankles and maintain circulation while flying, especially for long flights, reduce your salt intake to prevent water retention, which exacerbates swelling on the plane. Take herbal extracts like horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), and bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*). Research has shown the primary compound from horse chestnut, Aescin, to be comparable in effect to compression stockings in people with edema from chronic venous insufficiency. Gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*) triterpenoids have been shown to maintain good circulation and benefit carbon dioxide scores in people who supplemented with them before flights of varying lengths. Bilberry promotes overall circulation.^{2,4,5}

When flying:

- Drink a minimum of 4 oz of bottled water per hour of flight, but 8 oz are ideal.

- Bring your favorite herbal tea bags and ask for hot water instead of coffee or caffeinated tea; for a refreshing cold beverage, add a tincture to your bottled water, instead of high calorie juice or soda. Green or white tea extracts (*Camellia sinensis*) are beneficial as antioxidants and research shows that teas are often unfriendly to microbes; maybe this will offer some protection from re-circulated air on the plane.

Don't leave home without:

- **High-potency multivitamin** – to support all proper functions in the body, including immunity

- **Digestive enzymes**- to help you digest all types of food. Get a blend of enzymes, so you have help digesting more than one food group; lipase for fats, amylase for starches, bromelain or betaine HCl for proteins, alpha-galactosidase for legumes and cruciferous vegetables (beans and cabbages), and lactase for lactose (from dairy). There are many types of blends, so choose variety; simplicity might not serve you well enough.

- **Melatonin** –is a great way to alleviate jet lag, helping your body to adjust to the new time zone. You can use it before you leave, especially if anxiety or excitement keeps you up at night. For long flights, change your watch every few zones to the current time, and do not keep telling yourself what time it is in your home, because mentally adjusting to the time change also helps. When you arrive at your destination, try taking melatonin at night. The farther you are from home, the longer it takes to adjust, so you may need it for the first few nights. You can also take it when you return home, to get re-acclimated.¹⁰

- **Chewable Pepto-Bismol** (very convenient, and when you need it, you'd better have it!) – Hopefully you'll take the necessary precautions to avoid taking it, but your stomach is hard to predict while traveling. This is a safe, over-the-counter medicine that can really help you in a pinch, especially when you're stuck on a bus without a bathroom, or you were just looking forward to an evening out instead of in the bathroom. Nausea, vomiting, gas, abdominal pains, or diarrhea shouldn't stop you from having a great time. The bismuth in Pepto-Bismol is also somewhat protective against diarrhea-causing bacteria. You can take one or two tablets a day for prevention (this is inappropriate for those allergic to aspirin-type compounds).



- Avoid caffeine, which is dehydrating and simply adds to the physical stress of travel.
- Go for a cabin walk/stretch once an hour. Rotate your ankles, and massage your legs. Muscle movement helps to compress the lymph channels, and may help improve swelling.
- Avoid alcohol, which is dehydrating and taxing to your body. Use L-theanine as a healthy alternative to reduce anxiety and stress.
- When flying, you may be exposed to cosmic radiation. Nutrients that act as powerful antioxidants such as red tea (*Aspalathus linearis*), white tea, green tea, and SOD (orally absorbable superoxide dismutase) generally work to protect your cells and may be supportive.

Before, During, and After: So you have more happy stories to tell when you return

The following supplements can help with a variety of travel issues, depending on where you go and what you will be doing.

L-Theanine, an amino acid from green tea, helps you relax without making you drowsy. It has been shown to increase the emission of alpha-brain waves, which are usually highest when we are

awake and relaxed. 9,17

Mangosteen (*Garcinia mangostana*) provides antioxidants that may provide protection when exposed to many types of bacteria and fungi. It has compounds that can help reduce certain types of inflammation generated by the forms of free radicals seen in the digestive tract. Various Mangosteen compounds are responsible for these effects, primarily different types of polyphenols known as xanthenes.

Goji berry (*Lycium barbarum*) is a powerhouse of antioxidants, immune support, and energy support. It has traditionally been used to nourish the blood; research is now showing that Lycium extract may increase white and red blood cell production in the bone marrow. This is especially important if you are going to be in a higher altitude than usual. If your trip involves trekking in the mountains, this should certainly be a part of your preparation for the adventure.⁶

Rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*) is an herbal adaptogen that helps your body cope with stress (chemical, biological, and physical). It has been shown to help reduce symptoms associated with high altitude conditions, improve energy and mental focus, and measurably increase physical endurance and performance. It has a positive effect on many neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and dopamine, possibly by allowing them to last longer in the brain (boosting your mood).⁸

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is a safe and effective herb to support your respiratory tract and gastrointestinal tract by improving irritation, promoting proper mucus flow, and balancing bacteria. Turmeric can be helpful in keeping your airways clear during the flight, reducing congestion, and making take-off and landing easier on your ears.¹¹

If your trip involves many hours/days of sitting (or eating!), but you don't want to gain weight from it, take along some **Hoodia gordonii cactus** to reduce your appetite, and **concentrated green tea** (*Camellia sinensis*) to slow the absorption of sugar into the body, reduce fat storage, and keep your fat metabolism up.

Wear sunscreen. Prolonged UV exposure without proper protection can suppress immune cells, not to mention burn your skin (and severe burns make you susceptible to skin infections as well). Be safe in the sun and wear a strong-water resistant sunscreen, and don't forget a hat and sunglasses, and use nutri-

ents that migrate to your skin that may help protect it during sun exposure. Some nutrients that help improve antioxidant activity in the skin are: green tea, milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*), Ester-C, mixed isomers of natural vitamin E, and mixed carotenoids.¹ Exposure to parasites and other infectious microbes will vary depending on where you go and how carefully you follow guidelines to prevent exposure to them. The variety of parasites waiting for a good home is vast, and you want to protect yourself against them without harming yourself in the process. Talk to your doctor about what prescriptions you may need depending on where you travel.

Some of the nutrients that support good intestinal balance include Grapefruit seed extract (*Citrus paradisi*),

goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), oregano oil (*Origanum species*) and cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*).^{3,7,15}

If you'll be drinking alcohol: Take along milk thistle, L-theanine, and N-Acetyl-L-Cysteine, nutrients that support your metabolism of alcohol. These supplements may help protect your liver and may influence the possibility of a hangover.¹⁶

When you put the effort into preparing your body for the trip, it may seem laborious at first, but when you interact with other travelers and hear their stories of sickness, know that while you may never be as entertaining as they are, you will certainly have better memories.

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