Healthy at 30,000 Feet

Whether you’re traveling for business, visiting family or taking a well-deserved vacation, you’ve thought long and hard about what you’re going to pack and what your plans are for when you get there. But you probably haven’t spent much time, if any, thinking about the plane trip, except for how you’ll entertain yourself during the flight.

Stay healthy in every way with these tips for the next time you take off.

☐ Pack your own snacks. Many airlines no longer offer in-flight meals, and if they do, they’re usually not very healthy. To avoid breaking down and buying the “snack pack” of cookies, crackers and candy, pack your own meal. Easy-to-eat options include celery sticks with peanut butter, pretzels and cheese, or an apple and yogurt.

☐ Drink up—water, that is. The cabin air is very dry and can leave you dehydrated. Drink plenty of water before, during and after your flight, and avoid caffeine and alcohol, which further dehydrate you.

☐ Move around. Sitting for long periods of time can cause joint stiffness in people with arthritis and can lead to blood clots, even in healthy people. As long as the fasten seatbelt sign is off, get up and walk the aisle at least once per hour. If you’re stuck in your seat, stretch your legs by pointing your toes and then flexing at the ankles.

☐ Wash your hands. Contrary to popular belief, the air quality on planes is not what leads to illness. It’s being in close contact for extended periods with people who may be carrying cold and flu viruses. Wash your hands frequently, avoid touching your eyes and mouth, and use hand sanitizer when handwashing isn’t possible.

☐ Chew gum. If your ears hurt during flight, taking a decongestant medicine before departure may help. Also, chew gum or suck on a hard candy during take off and landing. Give babies a bottle or pacifier.

☐ Carry a medical identification card. If you have a chronic illness, such as diabetes or epilepsy, carry with you a notification card as well as a phone number for your doctor and a list of medications with the dosages you’re taking. Be sure to take enough medication with you to last you through the flight plus some extra in case there are delays or your luggage is lost.

Your One-Stop Shop for Health Information
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