

TRAVEL GUIDELINES FOR UNIVERSITY APPROVED TRAVEL

All Bond University staff/students who travel for approved Bond activities are exposed to hazards of frequent airline travel. The following guideline is designed to inform staff/students of the most common hazards facing travellers and to provide recommendations on risk reduction strategies. It is information that is collated from varied sources and may contain information that is not scientifically proven. It is recommended that each worker utilising the guideline employ modifications to ensure it is appropriate for each individual circumstance.

Air Quality

It is widely recognised that air quality is an important factor in airline travel health, as travellers are exposed to recirculated air as part of the flying experience. The recycled air provided to passengers is delivered at lower pressures than found at ground level, and may contain decreased levels of oxygen and humidity than the traveller may be used to. It is not uncommon for travellers to report air quality-related issues including headaches, dry skin, excessive thirst, colds, eye infections and shortness of breath which they ascribe to the changed air quality found in commercial aircraft.

Suggested risk prevention activities include the following:

- Minimise dehydration risks by avoiding beverages which result in water loss such as alcohol, caffeine.
- Drink bottled water; suggested intake is up to one bottle per hour whilst on the aircraft.
- Use moisturisers to keep skin moist and saline sprays to keep nostrils moist, to improve filtration of contaminants.
- Move around the aircraft cabin during the flight to improve blood circulation.

Radiation

High altitude flights reduce the natural protection afforded by the Earth's atmosphere experience at ground level, exposing passengers to increased levels of cosmic radiation. It is reported that the typical increased exposure is similar to that of a medical x-ray, there is uncertainty about the risk of increased exposure to cosmic radiation on 'at risk' passengers (e.g. those in the early stages of pregnancy).

Suggested risk prevention activities include the following:

- Be aware of the risk of increased exposure to cosmic rays. Make flight decisions in light of your risk tolerance. Consider your exposure levels to radiation include all medical imaging conducted over the past year.
- Avoid/minimise flights during the first trimester of pregnancy.

Stress

Airline flights and travel in general can be extremely stressful, even for the most experienced traveller. While travellers still hold psychological concerns about the safety of air travel, many find dealing with flight schedules, finding parking, airport security, cancellations or delays, lost luggage, cramped seating, crying children and loud/obnoxious fellow travellers, a stressful challenge. Regardless of the factors which cause stress it is important to recognise that, for many, travel does increase stress levels and physiological reactions, such as hormone secretions associated with stress. This can result in increased levels of anxiety associated with air flight.

Suggested risk prevention activities include the following:

- Recognise factors causing your stress and the physiological signs of its onset. Be prepared for and anticipate the symptoms of your stress responses.
- Recognise the drivers of your stress response, including sleep deprivation. Ensure you are well rested prior to your travel. Consider using ear plugs for sleep.
- Take actions which are successful in reducing the levels of stress hormones in our body, such as reading, comfortable clothing, in-flight entertainment, meditation etc.
- Anticipate stressful events occurring prior to the flight such as delays and the possibility of lost luggage. Plan to accommodate such mishaps to ensure they do not impact the remainder of your schedule, for example including extra time to make it to meetings on time or contingency planning.

Air rage

Air rage is a recently-coined term which relates to acts of violence and aggression associated with members of the flying public. It can be triggered by situations of stress, uncontrolled drinking, excessive use of drugs, or lack of sleep. While we may be able to recognise signs of stress in ourselves and take corrective actions, other members of the travelling public may not be as self-aware and as a result can become violent and aggressive to you, other passengers and airline staff.

Suggested risk prevention activities include the following:

- Fly with the 'right attitude'. Negative attitudes can quickly circulate around the plane, increasing the ambient stress levels and the likelihood of an air rage incident.
- Plan in your head what actions you would take in a stressful situation such as when confronted by an intoxicated or aggressive passenger.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

The increased risk of blood clots associated with any form of travel where passengers are relatively immobilised, is well

publicised and should be familiar to all who travel. Such clotting can occur in the young and healthy, as well as those who have a history of circulatory problems, so all passengers are at an elevated level of risk with this hazard. Long-haul flights present a significant risk of blood clots, and should be considered before such travel is scheduled.

Suggested risk prevention activities include the following:

- Follow exercises found in flight literature, to increase blood flow. Ensure you actively flex leg muscles every 30 minutes whilst seated.
- Consider wearing compression stockings while undertaking any extended flight.
- Walk around the plane at least once an hour to increase circulation.
- Discuss this risk with your physician to receive up-to-date information on DVT.

Jet Lag

Jet lag is well known to travellers but can result in serious accidents or injuries. Jet lag is a term applied to a temporary disruption to your body clock when you travel across several time zones, resulting in a feeling of being 'out of sync' with your current surroundings. Long-distance travel can disrupt your natural body rhythms of when you eat, sleep and require your body to make adjustments to the new environment. The period for your body to make such adjustments varies from person to person. Symptoms can vary, but commonly, reported effects of jet lag include fatigue, exhaustion, inability to sleep, disorientation, lost desire to eat, headaches, stomach aches and a general feeling of fuzziness.

Suggested risk prevention activities include the following:

- Be self-aware. Recognise prior to travel the likelihood of experiencing jet lag and schedule your activities accordingly. For example, consider delaying important meetings until your body has been able to adjust to the new schedule.
- Consider using public transportation until your body has adjusted to the new environment; refrain from driving until you feel you are fully alert.
- Ensure proper hydration levels are maintained by drinking water and refraining from alcoholic or caffeinated beverages.
- Consider adjusting your flight sleeping schedule to match those sleeping times of your destination during the flight.
- Adjust to the local time for eating and sleeping as quickly as possible, avoiding afternoon naps.

Communicable Diseases

There is considerable difference of opinion as to whether aircraft cabin air quality or close proximity to other passengers' causes an increase in the frequency of colds and flu's following air travel. While air quality issues have been discussed previously, the traveller should be reminded that, for the duration of the journey, they will be sharing a small space with many other people, some of whom may have a communicable disease. Travellers should recognise that in such an environment the transmission of disease is far more likely, especially in an environment of frequent hand contact. Dry air can reduce the effectiveness of our body's defences.

Suggested risk prevention activities include the following:

- Follow normal protocols associated with influenza prevention such as frequent hand washing; avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth during the trip; carry alcohol-based hand rubs and use them during the flight, especially before meals.
- Avoid contact with fellow passengers showing symptoms of a cold or flu.
- Frequent travellers may consider getting an annual flu vaccination.

Portable communication device ergonomics

Many travellers undertake their trip with portable communication devices (smart phones, i-pads, laptops etc). Consideration needs to be given to the environment in which these are being utilised whilst in transit and once at the destination. More suitable ergonomic postures can be adopted whilst in transit to reduce the likelihood of a musculoskeletal strain.

Suggested risk prevention activities include the following:

- Where possible establish a similar posture to the environment supplied on campus –
 - neck & head in a neutral position;
 - minimum of 90 degree angle achieved at the elbows, hips and knees;
 - sit in an upright position;
 - ensure adequate lighting;
 - position the device squarely in front of you, ideally on a flat surface;
 - device screen height is ideally at eye level.
- Ensure that all accommodation utilised whilst in transit has the availability of a work desk to undertake computer based activities.
- Vodafone has created an intuitive video on how you should consider the way you sit whilst using your portable devices. See more <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWonbpltvOA&feature=related>