

Ask 'Doctor D'

about jet lag



Ask 'Doctor D' is your opportunity to put questions people often want answers to, but don't like to ask, to the Doctors based at St. Andrews.

What is a 'Jet lag'?

Jet lag happens when a long-haul flight affects your body clock as your journey takes you into, and across, different time zones.

This can lead to feelings of tiredness, waking in the night, altered hunger patterns and confusion, sometimes lasting several days. The sooner your body clock adjusts to your new location the sooner you can get back to normal routines and activities.

Can I do anything to relieve it?

Some studies have advocated trying to alter your 'internal clock' before you travel:

- Try getting up and going to bed a little earlier if **travelling east**,
- and the opposite if **travelling west**
- Make sure you are well hydrated prior to boarding your flight
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine consumption during the flight
- Adjust your watch to the time at your destination as soon as you get on the plane and try to start acting accordingly
- Some studies advocate eating some 'super foods' such as:
 - lemons to stave off dehydration
 - bananas rich in potassium and magnesium to assist with muscle relaxation
 - cherries which are a natural source of melatonin (a hormone the body makes) that regulates the cycle of sleeping and waking, to help "reset" your sleep and wake cycle

- You can also try putting on extra jumpers and drinking hot drinks if you get the chills and sleepiness on arriving at your new destination

Avoid napping when you arrive at your new destination and stay active until the local norm or 'correct time' to sleep, as this will help your body adjust quicker. Spending time outdoors in natural light can also help.

The airline industry is trying to help us all with this problem, for example, the Airbus 380 cabin has been pressurised at 3000ft below other commercial airliners in an attempt to reduce jetlag. And the Boeing 787 cabins use LED lighting to simulate daytime light; some airlines have dark cabin ceilings with tiny star-like lights, to simulate night-time and request passengers to pull blinds down, all to make them think that it is indeed night-time.

Other Doctor D advice leaflets

Go to **Forms and Leaflets** on our website - www.standrewsmc-southborough.nhs.uk - and take a look at:

Doctor D on Acne

Doctor D on Tiredness

Doctor D on Childhood obesity

Doctor D on Hay fever

Doctor D on Colds & coughs