

Pain free flying

## Description

Avoiding increased pain when on vacation.

This is the first of a series of posts on staying pain free while traveling.

I just spent 10 days in Mexico with 4 friends, enjoying my time share and a few extra days in Isla Mujeres, a tiny island off the coast of the Yucatan as 25 minute ferry ride from Cancun. It was wonderful. I had my herbal pain killers at the ready, and took a couple every 4 -5 hours.

Plane rides are the worst for osteoarthritis and spinal stenosis and the 4 plus hours from Seattle to Houston were challenging. I am reminded of the many long plane rides I have taken and the technique I have learned for staying comfortable.

Back in 1992, right after my husband died, I took a trip to San Francisco for some R & R. We sat in the plane on the runway for 6 hours waiting for the fog to clear in SF so we could leave Seattle and land 2 1/2 hours later. If you've been following along, you'll remember that the traumatic injury to my L5 happened only 3 years earlier, and while I had rehabilitated enough to do 3/4 of the Wonderland Trail around Mt. Rainier in 1990, I was still at risk. Slouching in a chair, especially an airplane seat, is the worse possible thing to do for a potentially unstable back. As Moshe Feldenkrais would say, you are either sitting (sits bones directly under your erect back) or you are lying down (any tilted back position on down to prone). I was lying down in the most unsupported manner. When we finally landed in San Francisco, I could hardly walk. My left leg had extreme sciatica pain from the pinching at L5. What I learned from that experience has saved me from ever repeating it. It may help you.

I drink a lot of water and a rehydrating drink called Performance which I carry in a zip lock bag and mix with the water they offer, or in the bottle I carry on. Do you know that you lose a cup of water every hour you are in the air? You do not excrete only water, but minerals that you must have for proper balance in your system. These are the electrolytes you add with a high quality hydrating drink like Performance. (If you want to know more about the products I mention, go to [www.HiHoHealth](http://www.HiHoHealth.com) dot com.)

Drinking a lot forces me to get up and down to use the rest room. Moving prevents prolonged slouching from setting in. While sitting, I do isometric exercises. I seldom tilt my chair back but try to stay upright. On long flights to Asia and Africa, the TV monitor shows isometric exercises that are helpful. Here are several that I have used.

## **Isometric Leg Exercises**

Isometric exercises are an effective way to exercise during a flight. Also called static tension, isometric exercise involves a contraction of a muscle without a change in the length of the muscle. Bodybuilding.com recommends doing an isometric thigh exercise while sitting on your seat. Make a fist with your hands and place them under your knees. Squeeze your thigh and calves "around" your fist, and hold for five to 10 seconds.

## **Knee Exercises**

Knee flexions and extensions are other simple exercises to do during your flight. Knee flexion involves lifting your knee toward your chest while sitting on your seat with your back against the back rest. Lower your leg, and repeat with the opposite leg. Knee extension involves straightening your leg as far as you can while sitting with your back against the rest. This is crazy making in steerage where I sit. Do these exercises as many times as desired.

## **Calf Exercises**

Deep vein clots are common in the lower leg or thigh, according to the National Heart,

Lung and Blood Institute. Improve the blood flow in your lower leg by contracting your muscles. To do a calf raise, place your tiptoes on the floor. Thrust your heels upward as high as you can until you feel a contraction in your calves. Hold for five to 10 seconds, and lower your heels, or repeat continuously with a pumping motion. Repeat as often as you can to improve blood flow in your veins. This is a really good one.

## **Arms**

Exercise your arms with a wrist roller workout. Cross your fingers and do a rolling motion with your wrists for 10 to 20 seconds. Improve blood flow in your arms by making a fist with each hand and flexing your forearms toward the floor. Hold for 10 seconds, release and repeat. Optionally, raise your fists toward your chest and down to your thighs for 10 to 20 times to also target your biceps.

## **Shoulders and Chest**

Shoulder shrugs are a way to relieve tension in your upper body. Hold the shrug for 10 seconds and release. Exercise both the chest and shoulders by doing a rope climb. Imagine a rope hanging over your head, and “grasp” it with your hands as to climb it. With each motion, reach from over your head and pull down until your arms touch your thighs. Repeat 20 times with each hand.

## **Back and Abs**

Stretch your back by bending at your waist until your chest reaches your upper thighs. Hold for a few seconds and slowly return to an upright position. Keep your back straight throughout the stretch. Target your abdominal muscles sitting upright and exhaling completely. Without inhaling, suck in your stomach as deeply as you can and hold for few seconds. Release and repeat.

Read more: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/532387-seated-exercises-to-prevent-dvts/#ixzz1h1GMaIQ5>

Read more: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/460480-leg-exercises-for-while-you-are-in-flight/#ixzz1h1ExSucs>

Do not worry about what other people think. After all, your body needs this and their bodies could probably use it to. You might have the whole row exercising. You will have much less jet lag and arrive ready to walk and pull your suit case.

I would love to hear your techniques for keeping aches and pains under control while flying. Next week I will share my away-from-home morning routine before setting off for a day of site seeing.

Be Well, Do Well and Keep Moving.

Betsy

[www.HiHoHealth](http://www.HiHoHealth) dot com



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