TIPS FOR DEALING WITH JET LAG

Jet lag is the inability to sleep at the right time or being drowsy and sleepy at the wrong time – a mismatch between our biological clocks and the time zone we are in.

As a general guide the body takes roughly one day for each time zone travelled to adjust to a new cycle of day and night. So, you can probably travel through three hours without the need for specific counteractive measures as most of us can cope with going to sleep three hours later or earlier than normal once in a while) but more than that might need a bit of help.

As the body clock’s natural cycle is slightly longer than a day we find it easier to adjust travelling west, back in time, as it lengthens our day, whereas travelling east shortens it. Difficulties with jet lag can be cured by using light. You need to re-set your body clock. Use 4am (departure point time) as a guide. Exposure to bright light just before this time will delay your clock when going east; exposure to light a couple of hours after that time when going west will advance it.

Here are some other helpful tips for dealing with Jet Lag, compiled by sleep expert Professor Chris Idzikowski (author of Learn to Sleep Well)

• The day before your flight, ensure you eat three balanced meals, including at least five servings of fruit or green vegetable and one of protein-rich food eg white fish or tofu.

• During the flight set your watch to the local time at your destination. Note what extraordinary time the airline feeds you and try to keep back a roll or biscuit to eat at “normal” mealtimes according to the time at your destination.

• Take an eye mask and ear plugs with you. Use the mask and your seat’s nightlight to reflect the time at your destination – wear the mask if it is night time where you are going; keep the light on and mask off if it is day time.

• Drink plenty of water throughout the flight to prevent dehydration and also to help mobilise your energy reserves for your arrival. Avoid alcohol.

• Take regular walks up and down the aisle. Try some simple stretching exercises in your seat – straighten your legs and point and flex your toes; or stretch your arms high above your head. Do both these exercises for one minute every two hours.

• When you arrive at your destination use your diet to help you control your wakefulness: high protein meals increase your alertness; high carbohydrate meals will make you feel more sleepy.