

"The most practical, comprehensive guide for living longer and healthier in the 21st century!"

—DR. EARL MINDELL, author of *Prescription Alternatives*

# Blended Medicine

*The Best Choices  
in Healing*



The Breakthrough System That Combines  
NATURAL, ALTERNATIVE & MAINSTREAM MEDICINE  
for More Than **100** Ailments

**Michael Castleman**

Author of *Nature's Cures* and *The Healing Herbs*

## **JET LAG**

**T**he red-eye to flight to Paris took eight hours. You'd hoped to sleep on the plane, but barely dozed. Part of the problem was your aisle seat. Your row-mates kept bothering you to go to the bathroom. Then you couldn't get comfortable. Even when the lights went out, the reading light of the passenger next to you was too bright. And the cabin was noisy. So you got up and drowned your sorrows in the free champagne the flight attendants offered, and then chased it with a few cups of coffee.

You arrived exhausted and wired. You hardly had the energy to drag your bags to the taxi stand. At the hotel, the concierge asked, "Long flight?" All you could do was nod. You couldn't even think of the French for yes, *oui*.

You tried to nap, but couldn't. You considered a bite to eat, but weren't hungry. You took a shower but felt no better. It was four days before you felt fully human again.

### **What's Going On?**

**J**et lag causes fatigue, irritability, sleep problems, and fuzzy thinking when you fly long distances across times zones. Most people start to experience it after crossing three times zones (coast to coast). Virtually everyone feels it after trans-oceanic flights (U.S. to Europe or Asia).<sup>1</sup>

Jet lag is caused by a disruption of your body's internal clock (circadian rhythm), the mechanism that regulates your sleep-wake cycle.

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Your clock operates on a 24- to 25-hour day. When you fly east, your day becomes shorter, when you fly west, longer. You can reset the watch on your wrist in moments, but it takes a lot longer to reset your internal clock, for most people, about one day per time zone crossed. During your adjustment period, you feel out of sorts. That's jet lag.

Some people have an easier time flying east, others, west, and some experience the same jet lag no matter which way they fly.

### Best Choices

#### Plan Ahead

- **Get a good night's sleep before departure.** Jet lag hits harder if you arrive at the airport short on sleep.<sup>ii</sup> For most adults, that means at least seven hours a night.<sup>iii</sup> “Get a full night's sleep before your trip,” advises psychologist and sleep expert Stanley Coren, Ph.D., a professor at the University of British Columbia.<sup>iv</sup> “Forget the bon voyage party.”

- **Shift your sleep.** Before your departure, *when* you sleep can be as important as how long you sleep. Anne Simons, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of family and community medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, Medical Center, recommends this approach: “Determine the number of time zones you'll be crossing and count back that number of days. Then preadjust to your destination by getting up and going to sleep one hour a day earlier when flying east, or an hour a day later when flying west. By the time you arrive, your body should have adjusted to your destination time.”<sup>v</sup>

- **Arrive in the late afternoon.** For reasons that remain a mystery, the body clock suffers less disruption if you arrive at your destination in the late afternoon, Dr. Coren explains. Seasoned flyers have this rule of thumb:

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“Travel east, fly early. Travel west, fly late.” Once you arrive, eat a light dinner and go to bed no later than 11 p.m. local time, Dr. Coren advises.<sup>vi</sup>

- **Pack sleep aids.** If you hope to sleep while flying, travel medicine specialist Sam Shealanski, M.D., medical columnist for Rodale’s *Scuba Diving* magazine, says book a window seat so fellow passengers won’t disturb you climbing in and out of theirs. Pull the window shade down. Pack ear plugs and a sleep mask in your carry-on. And stow your carry-on overhead so you have as much room as possible to stretch out.<sup>vii</sup>

### Diet

- **Drink up.** Aircraft cabins are very dry, which can lead to dehydration. Even minor dehydration can make you feel mentally fuzzy and out of sorts,<sup>viii</sup> which aggravates jet lag.<sup>ix</sup> Psychiatrist William Dement, M.D., director of the Stanford University Sleep Disorders Clinic, and chair of the National Commission on Sleep Disorders Research (NCSDR),<sup>x</sup> recommends drinking plenty of water and juices while flying.<sup>xi</sup>

- **Eat light for a day or two.** Your digestive system is tied to your internal clock, and can give you “stomach lag.” You may feel ravenous at nonmeal times at your destination and full when everyone else is eating. A light diet of easily digestible foods often helps: salads, fruits, breads, Dr. Coren advises.<sup>xii</sup> Dr. Dement adds: Avoid highly spiced foods before bedtime for the first few days at your destination. They disrupt sleep.<sup>xiii</sup>

### Lifestyle

- **Lay off alcohol.** Alcohol is a bad idea for several reasons, Dr. Coren explains: It’s dehydrating. It’s intoxicating, which further aggravates mental fuzziness. And it disrupts sleep, which makes jet lag worse.<sup>xiv</sup>

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- **Take care with caffeine.** On trans-oceanic flights, go easy on caffeine if you're scheduled to arrive at night, Dr. Simons says. If you arrive by day, you can have coffee or caffeinated soft drinks, but depending on your caffeine sensitivity, time it so that you don't have any for six to 10 hours before your anticipated bedtime.<sup>xv</sup>

- **Watch your watch.** Reset your watch when you depart, and during the flight, try to live on destination time. This is especially helpful on trans-oceanic flights. If you're in the air when it's night time at your destination, try to sleep on the plane. If it's day time, try to stay awake in flight.<sup>xvi</sup>

If you don't reset your watch as you board your flight, be sure to do so on arrival. Try to live on destination time. Eat when the locals eat. Go to sleep at your bedtime local time. "Most importantly," Dr. Coren says, "awaken in the morning local time."<sup>xvii</sup>

### Supplements

- **Minimize discomfort with melatonin.** Melatonin, a hormone produced by the pineal gland in your brain, plays a key role in resetting your internal clock.<sup>xviii</sup> Many studies show that melatonin can be used to minimize jet lag.<sup>xix</sup> Here are two:

- Scientists at the Aeromedical Research Laboratory at Fort Rucker, Alabama, gave military flight crews either a placebo or melatonin (10 mg) before sending them on a mission that involved rapid deployment to the Middle East and complicated maneuvers shortly after arrival. Compared with the placebo group, those who took melatonin woke up more refreshed and made only half as many errors during maneuvers.<sup>xx</sup>

- New Zealand researchers tested melatonin on 52 member of commercial jet flight crews flying international routes. Some were given a

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placebo, the others, melatonin (5 mg). Six days after arrival, those taking melatonin showed significantly less jet lag.<sup>xxi</sup>

Circadian rhythm expert Alfred Lewy, M.D., Ph.D., a professor of psychiatry at the Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland and director of the Sleep Laboratory there,<sup>xxii</sup> says melatonin works best when you take it at specific times and coordinate its use with exposure to sunlight:

When flying west: On the day before you fly, on your travel day, and on the morning after you arrive, take the hormone when you wake up. After arrival, on days 2 and 3, take it an hour later than on the previous day. In addition, get outside in the afternoon and expose yourself to sunlight.

When flying east: On the day before you fly and on your travel day, take it around 3 p.m. When you arrive, take it at 3 p.m. home time (that is, 6 p.m. if you live in on the West coast and flew East.) After arrival, on days 2 and 3, take it an hour earlier than on the previous day. Get morning sun.<sup>xxiii</sup>

How much melatonin should you take? The studies above used 5 and 10 mg. Most melatonin comes in 3 mg doses. But to minimize jet lag, Dr. Lewy recommends 0.5 mg.<sup>xxiv</sup> Experiment and see what works best for you.

### Exercise

- **Wake up, work out.** Exercise helps reset your internal clock. On your first morning at your destination, get some exercise. “Calisthenics, an aerobic workout, even running in place for 10 minutes can help you reset your internal clock,” Dr. Coren says.<sup>xxv</sup>

### Phototherapy

- **Run to the sun.** If possible, exercise outside. “Exposing yourself to sunlight is one of the best ways to reset your internal clock,” Dr. Coren

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explains.<sup>xxvi</sup> That's why getting sun exposure is part of Dr. Lewy's melatonin regimen.

### Other Good Choices

#### Chinese Medicine

- **Needle know-how.** To prevent the stress that causes jet lag, San Francisco Chinese physician Efrem Korngold, L.Ac., O.M.D., co-author (with Harriet Beinfield, L.Ac.) of *Between Heaven and Earth: A Guide to Chinese Medicine*,<sup>xxvii</sup> suggests acupuncture before departure and after arrival:

- Liver 3. In the hollow behind and between the knuckles of the big toe and second toe.

- Large Intestine 4. On top of the hand, in the hollow of the muscle between the thumb and index finger.

- Extra Point Yin Tang. On the front of the head, just above the root of the nose, exactly between the eyebrows.

You might also get some benefit from acupressure. Stimulate each of these points with steady, penetrating finger pressure for three minutes.

#### Homeopathy

- **Microdose magic.** Berkeley, California, homeopath Dana Ullman, M.P.H., author of *The Consumer's Guide to Homeopathy*, recommends several homeopathic medicines for jet lag. "The primary treatment is *Arnica* (leopard's bane)," he explains. "It's the medicine of choice for shock and traumatic injury. Jet lag isn't an injury, but it's a shock to the system." For jet lag that causes extreme fatigue, Ullman suggests *Gelsemium* (yellow jessamine). If jet lag gives you stomach distress, he suggests *Ipechacuanha*

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(ipecac). If you feel dizzy, he recommends *Cocculus* (Indian cockle).<sup>xxviii</sup>

Follow package directions or a homeopath's recommendations.

### ...And Finally

Consider not adjusting at all. It takes most people about one day to adjust for each time zone crossed.<sup>xxix</sup> If you're flying from New York to London for a week (eight time zones) or Atlanta to Los Angeles for a weekend convention (three times zones), it can take you longer to adjust than you'll be there. "Consider staying on home time," Dr. Simons says. This works well if you're flying east and can wake up and stay up late, or if you're flying west and can wake up and go to bed early.

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<sup>i</sup> Shelanski, S. "How to Beat Jet Lag," *Scuba Diving*, 7-98.

<sup>ii</sup> *Doctor's Bk of Home Remedies*, p. 393.

<sup>iii</sup> Stanley Coren, Ph.D. (604) 822-6458.

<sup>iv</sup> Stanley Coren, Ph.D. (604) 822-6458.

<sup>v</sup> Anne Simons, MD. (415) 282-3570. Anne is my wife. We've both had very good success with this approach. See also *Before You Call the Doctor*, p. 114.

<sup>vi</sup> Coren, S. *Sleep Thieves*, p. 234. *Doctor's Bk of Home Remedies*, p. 393.

<sup>vii</sup> Personal experience, and Coren, S. *Sleep Thieves*, p. 235.

<sup>viii</sup> *Health & Fitness Excellence*, p. 254.

<sup>ix</sup> Brody, J. "Jet Lag," *NY Times*, 4-30-97. Shelanski, S. "How to Beat Jet Lag," *Scuba Diving*, 7-98. *Doctor's Bk of Home Remedies*, p. 393.

<sup>x</sup> William Dement, MD (650) 321-6966 or (650) 723-6601.

<sup>xi</sup> *Sleepwatchers*, p. 92.

<sup>xii</sup> Coren, S. *Sleep Thieves*, p. 235.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Sleepwatchers*, p. 92.

<sup>xiv</sup> Personal experience, and Coren, S. *Sleep Thieves*, p. 235.

<sup>xv</sup> Personal experience, and Coren, S. *Sleep Thieves*, p. 235.

<sup>xvi</sup> Personal experience, and Coren, S. *Sleep Thieves*, p. 235.

<sup>xvii</sup> Coren, S. *Sleep Thieves*, p. 235.

<sup>xviii</sup> Brody, J. "Jet Lag," *NY Times*, 4-30-97.

<sup>xix</sup> See Melatonin packed from MEDLINE.

<sup>xx</sup> In MEDLINE packet: Comperatore, CA et al. "Melatonin Efficacy in Aviation Missions Requiring Rapid Deployment and Night Operations," *Aviation, Space, and Environmental Medicine* (1996) 67:520.



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- <sup>xxi</sup> In MEDLINE packet: Petrie, K. et al. "A Double-Blind Trial of Melatonin as Treatment for Jet Lag in International Cabin Crews," *Biol. Psychiatry* (1993) 33:526.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Alfred Lewy, MD, Ph.D. (503) 494-7746.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Brody, J. "Jet Lag," *NY Times*, 4-30-97.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> "Melatonin: A Trusty Travel Companion?" *The Physician & Sportsmedicine*, 11-96.  
Brody, J. "Jet Lag," *NY Times*, 4-30-97.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Personal experience, and Coren, S. *Sleep Thieves*, p. 235. *Doctor's Bk of Home Remedies*, p. 394.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Personal experience, and Coren, S. *Sleep Thieves*, p. 235. *Doctor's Bk of Home Remedies*, p. 394.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Efrem Korngold, OMD (415) 824-3632.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Dana Ullman, MPH (510) 649-8931. *Consumer's Guide to Homeopathy*, pp. 322-323, 381-382.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Brody, J. "Jet Lag," *NY Times*, 4-30-97.