

Lymphedema and Air Travel

Useful Tips

Useful Tips for the Airline Traveler:

Plan ahead:

- Seek the advise of your physician and your lymphedema therapist if there are any questions
- Carry your medication with you. If your destination is located in hot or mosquito-infested areas, take precaution (sun screen, insect repellants, antibiotics)
- Bring your skin lotion - the air in pressurized cabins is extremely dry
- If possible, request an exit seat, which gives you more legroom. Definitely request an aisle seat so you can get up periodically without disturbing the person sitting next to you.
- Allow ample time to check in and reach your departure gate
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing and comfortable shoes that have been worn previously. If you have lymphedema of the leg you should not take off your shoes during the flight
- Make sure that you can manage your luggage. If you travel with another person or a group, ask someone else to carry the luggage for you. Should you travel on your own, take a smaller suitcase (preferably one with wheels). Do not lift your luggage from the baggage carousel with your swollen arm
- Check the quality of your compression garment. If you have more than one garment, take the extra one with you as a back up. If your destination is located at high altitudes, you need to take the same precautions as for your flight. Take extra bandages (short stretch) with you

Inflight:

- Most important: relax and enjoy your flight
- Eat lightly Drink plenty of water or fruit juices
- Do not place anything under the seat in front of you, so you can stretch and exercise your legs
- Stand up and walk around the cabin periodically (observe the fasten seat belt light)
- Ask somebody else to place your carry-on luggage in the overhead compartment
- Make sure to execute some easy to remember "muscle pump" exercises (roll you feet, lift the heels and toes alternating, etc.). Ask your therapist about recommended exercises during the flight
- Elevate your arms as often as possible if you have upper extremity lymphedema
- Wear your compression garments!
- If you have a stocking with an open toe part, make sure that you apply bandages on your toes and any other part of your foot that may be exposed
- It is absolutely necessary to wear a glove (or finger/hand bandage) in addition to your arm sleeve. If you have a gauntlet without finger stubs, you need to bandage your fingers
- It is also a good idea to wear an additional short stretch bandage on top of your garment to counter the effects of low cabin pressure – talk to your therapist!

Arrival :

- Do not remove your garment and any additional bandage materials before you reach your final destination
- Upon arrival at your hotel, etc., a rest should be your top priority. Make sure to have your limb elevated. A few more exercises with your garments in place would be beneficial – use moderation and remember that rest is more important