



Traveling for the Holidays? Start with a Healthy Approach

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Holiday Travel Tips from the Society for Vascular Surgery

ROSEMONT, Ill., December 23, 2019 – Nearly one in three Americans traveled during the holidays last year and the Triple A travel organization believes that number is likely to continue to grow. With busy holiday travel schedules comes exposure to a lot of congestion – not only at airports and on the roads – but also congestion due to sickness as well.

While sometimes the last thing on travelers' minds during the holidays is focusing on personal health, the Society for Vascular Surgery has a few tips for travelers to stay healthy during the holiday season.

Wash your hands. More holiday travelers means more exposure to sickness and germs this time of year. Remember to wash hands frequently and for at least 15 seconds. For times when you have no access to a faucet, carry a travel-size bottle of hand sanitizer and remember to use it before eating or drinking and after touching surfaces in airports or train stations, on planes and on trains. Carry a package of disinfectant wipes for dirty surfaces around your assigned seat. Don't forget to wipe the seatbelt buckle.

Drink plenty of fluids. Remember to stay hydrated while traveling. Most airports have water stations to let you fill up your personal water container from home so you don't have to buy plastic water bottles. Flying can cause dehydration, so increase your water intake. Juices with vitamin C are also a good choice as are supplements that support immune system health. Remember that coffee and alcohol can cause dehydration, making you susceptible to infection.

Find time to de-stress. Many people do not realize how much stress they put on their bodies during the holidays. The stress hormone cortisol can affect the body's immune system to fight potential infection. Take breaks and find a quiet place to decompress and be sure to get plenty of sleep. Try for at least six to eight hours, as people who sleep less are more likely to get a cold.

Keep moving. Inactivity of four hours or more may contribute to DVT, also known as deep vein thrombosis, or deep vein blood clots. DVT occurs when blood thickens in a clump that becomes solid, forming a clot. Nearly 300,000 first-time cases of DVT occur in the U.S. every year, usually in the leg. Traveling long distances without moving poses an increased risk of DVT and the risk of DVT doubles after four hours or more of travel. Not everyone shows symptoms, which include swelling, pain and tenderness, or change of coloring in the affected leg. If you can, incorporate short exercises such as walking for 20 minutes in the airport terminal. During a trip, try some seated leg and foot exercises

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such as ankle circles, leg lifts and calf stretches. This encourages blood flow and reduces blood stagnation. Wear loose clothing, so blood flow is not constricted. Higher-risk individuals include people over age 40, smokers and people with a previous history of DVT, high blood pressure, diabetes or who are overweight. The risk of blood clot complications due to DVT can remain elevated for up to four weeks after a flight. If you believe you may be at higher risk, speak to a doctor, such as a vascular surgeon, prior to traveling. Vascular surgeons are highly trained experts who manage the long-term care of patients with all stages of circulatory disorders, providing diagnosis, medical management, non-surgical solutions, checkups and surgery, both open and endovascular. For more information on DVT visit www.vascular.org .

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The Society for Vascular Surgery® (SVS) is a not-for-profit professional medical society, composed of specialty-trained vascular surgeons and professionals, which seeks to advance excellence and innovation in vascular health through education, advocacy, research and public awareness.

Resources:

Deep Vein Thrombosis: <https://vascular.org/patient-resources/vascular-conditions/deep-vein-thrombosis>

6 Things to Know About Travels Thrombosis: <https://vascular.org/news-advocacy/6-things-know-about-travelers-thrombosis>

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