El Periódico de la Salud
Albufera Contigo

FREE GUIDES FOR TRAVELLERS

Before you fly: preventive protocol for flights over 4 hours

How to reduce the risk of blood clots on long journeys and when to see a doctor before you leave.

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1. The risk in figures

- According to the World Health Organization, the risk of venous thrombosis roughly doubles after 4 hours or more of seated travel, by plane, train, bus or car.
- Even so, the absolute risk is low: about 1 case per 6,000 passengers on flights over 4 hours.
- The risk increases with the length of the journey and with several flights in a short period.

2. During the journey

- Get up and walk around the cabin every 2 to 3 hours, when it is safe.
- Move your feet up and down at the ankle to activate the calf circulation.
- Do not put hand luggage under the seat if it stops you moving your legs.
- Wear loose clothing around the waist and legs.
- Avoid sedatives and too much alcohol, which keep you still for longer.
- Do not take aspirin only to prevent travel-related thrombosis: WHO advises against it because of side effects.

3. See your doctor before flying if

- You have had a thrombosis before, have active cancer, recent surgery, are pregnant or postpartum, have severe obesity or take oestrogens.
- You take medication on a strict timetable, such as insulin or oral contraceptives.

- Your doctor will tell you whether you need compression stockings in your size or another treatment.

4. Symptoms that need help

- Pain, swelling or warmth in one leg after the journey.
- Chest pain or shortness of breath: call 112.

5. Check-up before your trip

- If any of these factors apply to you, book an appointment with your doctor or at Centro Médico Benavides Lachaise (+34 690 021 190) before your flight.

Sources

- OMS — Resultados del estudio sobre viajes y trombosis (WRIGHT)
- OMS — International Travel and Health, capítulo de viaje en avión
- TravelHealthPro (UKHSA) — Venous thromboembolism

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