

# Travel Hacks: Stay Healthy While Flying



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## [How Business Travel Can Be a Danger to Your Health](#)

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We've escaped one of the worst flu seasons yet, but travelers still have to get from Point A to Point B for that [board meeting](#) and need to do so without catching the sniffles. How do you keep your [health](#) intact when trapped in an incubator for various microbial agents at 40,000 feet? It takes some careful thought and advanced planning, but below our health experts dish on precautions you can take to keep the germs at bay.

**1. Before and after you board: Protect that immune system.** Take care to wash your hands a minimum of five times a day and also shower as soon as possible after deplaning to remove the dirt from your body, clean the pores, and rid your hair of any unwanted bacteria that might have collected during your travels, advises Rick O'Shea, president and COO of [ByoPlanet](#), a Florida-based company that has developed a patented system for disinfecting airplanes.

If using hand sanitizers, avoid those containing alcohol, O'Shea adds. "These products break down your body's virus defense mechanism by drying out your skin and allowing viruses to penetrate through the cracks in your dry skin."

**2. While on the plane: Disinfect, disinfect, disinfect.** It comes as no surprise that the seat you're occupying could be crawling with germs—and that most often air travelers get sick from something they touch. But don't neglect your arm rest, window shade, overhead bins and tray tables, advises [Bobby Laurie](#), a flight attendant for a major U.S. carrier. "Those are all parts of the plane that are not cleaned during 'quick turns,' when the plane arrives and only has 45 minutes to one hour to deplane," says Laurie, who is also a travel correspondent for *The Daily Buzz*.

Laurie suggests carrying anti-bacterial wipes and disinfecting the entire area around your seat—all the places people routinely touch—as well as bringing a disposable mat if you plan to use the tray for snacking or working. Likewise, carry a pack of tissues and use them as a barrier between

you and the lavatory door handle or toilet flush and avoid unnecessary contact with others, such as handshakes.

Phones are a cesspool for germs, and chances are you don't wipe yours down nearly as often as you should; an article in LiveScience reported that cell phones have 10 times as many germs as toilet seats. "Electronics can be the breeding ground for bacteria and other germs such as E. coli, Staphylococcus, and Salmonella or Pseudomonas," explains Hank Lambert, chief executive officer of [PURE Bioscience](#), a California-based company that has developed a non-toxic, antimicrobial disinfectant. He suggests that travellers wipe down their phone and other electronic devices daily or after placing them on public surfaces. Electronic-friendly products like [Sani-Screen Wipes](#) will do just the trick and are portable and individually wrapped.

**3. When the dining cart rolls by: Mind your food and beverages.** Food consumption is a major cause of airborne illness, Lambert says. He advises avoiding the in-flight tea and coffee service and—if you need that caffeine fix—bringing your own on board instead. [Test results from the EPA have found that in 2012](#), 12 percent of commercial airlines tested positive for a bacteria that's a strong indicator for E.Coli. O'Shea says that don't airlines don't always heat the water to the temperature that kills bacteria. In some isolated cases, passengers have fallen ill after drinking coffee or tea from water that hasn't been properly heated and was contaminated. "Drink through a clean straw after removing the paper to avoid mouth contact on touch surfaces," says O'Shea.

Lambert also suggests not putting food in the seat pocket—an area of the plane not frequently cleaned—in front of you if bringing on your own snacks or meals. "You often see people store food in the pocket in the seat in front of them. That's an area where bacteria could accumulate and be transferred from the pocket to the food or utensil you're using." Similarly, keep your food and beverages covered with a clean napkin to prevent airborne germs from tainting them. "When you're in a closed environment and you have people who might have the flu, they're exhaling, coughing or sneezing into the environment," Lambert adds, "and that also can contaminate your food."

*Correction: This article has been updated to refer to wipes as "anti-bacterial" not "de-sanitizing."*