

The Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic & Hearing Center

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS WHO EXPERIENCE EAR OR SINUS PAIN OR PRESSURE WITH AIR TRAVEL

Many people, especially those with chronic inflammatory changes of the nasal mucous membranes, experience pain or pressure in the ears or sinuses with air travel. One way to minimize discomfort with flying is to reduce inflammation of the nasal mucous membranes. We recommend the following guidelines when traveling by airplane:

1. Afrin® (Oxymetazoline) or Neosynephrine® (Phenylephrine) Nasal Spray, 2 sprays in each nostril:
 - Prior to boarding the aircraft
 - Again on takeoff
 - When seatbelt light is illuminated for initial descent
 - Again on final approach.

Although this is more frequent use than recommended on the Afrin or Neosynephrine bottle, it is safe to do for only one day.

2. Sudafed® (Pseudoephedrine): this oral medication can be taken according to the package directions on the day of air travel; people with high blood pressure, though, should avoid this medication as it can elevate blood pressure.
3. Auto-insufflation: this is the technical name for “popping one’s ears,” and it is accomplished by pinching your nose and gently attempting to blow your nose against your obstructed nostrils; this increases pressure in the back of the nose, with the goal of inflating the middle ear space(s) with a small volume of air. This may be helpful on descent in an aircraft, and it should be done gently. If you are unable to perform this maneuver with only gentle pressure, do not continue to attempt it.