



You may need to take action to keep your circulation healthy while traveling.

## Healthy Circulation Travel Tips

By Luis Navarro

Healthy circulation in the legs requires healthy veins and valves, and what vein doctors call the "second heart."

The second heart is a complex of muscles in the calves and feet together with their veins and valves. With every step, these muscles contract and send blood to the heart, preventing it from pooling in the legs.

If the blood does pool, it can result in short-term issues like ankle swelling, heaviness in the legs, cramps, and even phlebitis (clotting of the blood inside the veins). In the long term, pooled blood can give rise to varicose veins.

While traveling, especially on planes, and sitting for long periods of time without walking, we are not taking advantage of the second heart, which leads to the heaviness in the legs and the ankle and foot swelling that many people experience.

In more severe cases, people develop what is known as "economy class syndrome," which is clotting inside the veins. When this clotting occurs in the surface level leg veins, it will be painful and ruin your vacation.

If it occurs in the deep veins of the legs, it may be life threatening and result in blood clots going to the heart and lungs.

This "economy class syndrome" is very well known in airports. This situation is more so aggravated or made worse when the traveler already has venous problem.

### Circulation Health Tips for Flying

1. Whether you already have a venous problem or not, wear mild compression stockings (15-20 mmHg).
2. Drink lots of fluids, especially water, to keep yourself well hydrated. (6-8 cups a day).
3. If you are very concerned, you can take baby aspirin a few days before your trip because this makes your blood thinner, decreasing your chances of developing blood clots.
4. While you are on the plane, stand up and walk up and down the aisle for a few minutes every hour.
5. After walking for a few minutes, rise up onto the tips of your toes and then lower down. Do this 10-15 times.
6. While you are sitting, flex and extend your feet and rotate your ankles.
7. Avoid alcohol or drink only a moderate amount on your trip.



Dr. Luis Navarro

*Dr. Luis Navarro, M.D. is a Board Certified General Surgeon, who has devoted his professional life to the development of treatments for venous disorders. He is the founder and director of the Vein Treatment Center in Manhattan, where he developed a method to treat varicose veins painlessly. VeinTreatmentCenter.com.*