

With spring break around the corner, and travel season looming, many people with chronic back pain aren't looking forward to vacation; they're worried about how to manage the pain associated with a long flight. Forum member Tallguy, who is preparing for a grueling 12 hour flight from Taiwan to the US, recently asked for advice on how to fly comfortably despite back pain caused by disc degeneration. Several members responded with suggestions to help minimize his back pain and make his trip more tolerable.

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Move.

Get up and walk and stretch as frequently as possible. Go to the back of the plane and do back bends, etc. Consider bringing a doctor's note and alert the flight crew prior to boarding that you have a back condition and will need to move about more often than normal passengers.

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Smart Flight Scheduling.

Try to book a flight for a time of day when the plane is likely to be on the empty side. If there are any empty rows, ask to be moved to one so you can lie down across the seats. This will help keep pressure off of your back.

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Posture Perfect.

Bring a back roll or ask for extra pillows to put behind your back to keep your spine straight and prevent slouching. This will alleviate pain and pressure. If you are on the shorter side, bring something to prop up your feet to keep your knees at a right angle.

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Bring the Heat and Chill.

Bring gel packs that can be frozen or heated (or bring one

of each). These are great for treating swelling, sore muscles, back pain and even headaches. Be sure to have the physician's note about your back condition handy in case airport security has issues with the gel pack in your carry-on luggage; medically necessary items over the 3 oz. limit are permitted through the security checkpoint.

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Pain Medication.

OTC pain killers like acetaminophen and NSAIDs, or prescription drugs like narcotics or muscle relaxants, can help "take the edge" off during and after the flight. (Read more about back pain medication). Again, a letter from your doctor stating your need for any prescribed pain medications will help with possible airport security issues; and always be sure to keep medications in their original bottles.

Using a combination of the tips above should make travel as easy on your back as possible. Happy trails
<http://www.spine-health.com>