



## MISSISSIPPI EAR, NOSE AND THROAT SURGICAL ASSOCIATES, P.C.

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### EARS, ALTITUDE AND AIRPLANE TRAVEL

The following suggestions are made for those people who have trouble with their ears (pain or blockage) during the course of airplane travel:

1. Swallow or yawn. This activates the muscle that opens the Eustachian tube which connects the back of the nose with the middle ear.
2. Avoid sleep during descent. You may not swallow enough to keep up with the pressure changes.
3. Unblock your ears by using the following method:
  - a) Pinch your nostrils shut
  - b) Take a mouthful of air
  - c) Use your cheek or throat muscles to force the air into the back of your nose as if you were trying to blow and fingers off your nostrils. When you hear a loud pop in your ears, you have succeeded. You may have to repeat this several times during descent.
4. If you are traveling with a baby, give him or her a bottle or pacifier to suck, and do not allow him or her to sleep during descent.
5. Use a decongestant pill or nasal spray an hour or so before descent. This shrinks membranes and makes the ears pop more easily. Travelers with allergy problems should take their antihistamine tablets at the beginning of the flight.

**WARNING:** Decongestant tablets and sprays should be avoided by persons with heart disease, high blood pressure, irregular heart rhythms, thyroid disease or excessive nervousness.

If your ears are not relieved by any or all of the above suggestions, you may need to see an otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat doctor) as soon as possible.