



## Avoid Earaches in the Air

Human ears were designed to handle only slow, measured changes in pressure -- such as you experience hiking up a mountain. But airplanes take you from sea level to mountain level in seconds, which can create a painful imbalance between the air pressure in your head and that of the outside world. Here are a few solutions:

- ◆ **CHEW GUM OR SUCK ON HARD CANDY.** This promotes swallowing, which prompts the Eustachian tube -- the pressure regulator connecting the middle ear with the back of the nose -- to open and begin working. Sucking on a bottle or pacifier may help babies.
- ◆ **YAWN.** A good solid yawn, mouth opened wide and jaw stretched forward, can produce the same effect.
- ◆ **TRY THE VALSALVA MANEUVER (on descent only).** Pinch your nostrils between thumb and forefinger, take a mouthful of air, then, using only the muscles in your cheeks and throat (not lungpower), gently force the air into the back of your nose. This should open the Eustachian tube and help your ears to pop. Don't blow too hard, and if you have a throat infection don't use this maneuver at all, as you risk pushing the infection to your inner ear.
- ◆ **USE EARPLANES.** These special pressure-adjusting earplugs cost around \$5 a pair, and are made for both adults and children. For information, see [cirrushealthcare.com/earplanes.htm](http://cirrushealthcare.com/earplanes.htm)
- ◆ **DON'T SLEEP DURING DESCENT.** When you're asleep, you swallow less, giving the Eustachian tube fewer opportunities to function. Also, pressure will build to far greater levels before you notice and react to it.
- ◆ **TAKE AN ANTIHISTAMINE** an hour or two before flying if you're feeling stuffy or have other symptoms that may signal a developing cold. The antihistamine will dry out your clogged Eustachian tube and allow it to work properly.

## Help For Motion Sickness



If you suffer from motion sickness and must travel frequently for business or pleasure, a new source of help may be just what the doctor ordered. Allergy pills reduce the problem by blocking the signals from the inner ear to the stomach. Common medications such as Claritin, Allegra, and Benadryl are all beneficial. Take the medicine thirty minutes before starting your trip. Caution! Some allergy medicines can make you feel drowsy, so read the labels.