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## Air Travel Health Tips

Fly the friendly skies without coming home with a cold

LOS ANGELES – The holiday season when family and friends come together for festive celebrations often involves air travel. Be prepared for air travel with these healthy tips from the Department of Public Health.

“Several factors can increase the odds of coming home from vacation with a cold or other respiratory infection. On airplanes, we are susceptible to disease from other passengers sitting near us,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Bacteria and viruses can be found on tray tables, seat-back pockets and reused airline’s pillows and blankets.”

A common thought is that we get a cold from recirculated air on flights. But according to a study in the *Journal of Environmental Health Research*, recirculation of aircraft air was not the cause of cold after a flight. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found that high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters on most jets today can capture 99.9% of bacterial and virus-carrying particles. However, the combination of a very dry cabin air and fatigue do increase the risk of contracting an upper respiratory infection.

To minimize the risk of getting ill from air travel, we recommend:

- Drink water to stay hydrated.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- Clean your hands frequently with an alcohol-based hand cleanser.
- Cover you nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Avoid the pocket in the back of the seat.
- Bring your own pillow and blanket.
- Open the overhead air vent to circulate the air around you.
- Change seats, if possible, when sitting next to someone with a cold.
- Raise concerns if air circulation is shut off for an extended period of time.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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