

Fasten Your Seatbelt and Take Your Fasprin

Airline travel that lasts four hours or longer is associated with a one in 6,000 absolute risk of developing venous thromboembolism, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Multiple long trips taken within four weeks increased the risk, and the longer the trip, the greater the risk. Those who travel by train, bus, or car don't escape risk. WHO stated that any trip that requires passengers to sit for four or more hours increased the risk of either deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE), the two most common manifestations of venous thromboembolism. The risk of DVT remains elevated four weeks after the flight is over.

An analysis published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, August 4, 2009, found that travel was associated with a three-fold increase in the risk of venous thromboembolism (VTE) – blood clots that form in veins, often in the legs. Factors such as dehydration, hours of sitting in cramped conditions, low oxygen, low pressure, airline seats and underlying medical conditions such as cancer patients, post-surgery such as joint replacement and women on birth control pills contribute to the risk. The risk climbed with the duration of the trip – rising 18% for every two hours of travel, and 26% for every two hours of air travel.

DVT is a medical condition due to the formation of a fibrin clot in the deep veins of the body, usually the legs. Symptoms of DVT are principally pain, tenderness and swelling of the affected body part. Thrombosis is also associated with minor injuries in the leg, such as in sporting events. Up to 600,000 patients are hospitalized each year for the condition and the American Heart Association estimates that two million people suffer from DVT annually. The primary complication of DVT is pulmonary embolism of which 300,000 people die yearly – more than breast cancer and AIDS combined.

The Pulmonary Embolism Prevention trial reported in *Lancet* 2000;355:1295-302, that low-dose aspirin reduces the risk of pulmonary embolism and deep-vein thrombosis by at least a third throughout a period of increased risk. Aspirin reduced the risk of PE by 43%, and DVT by 29% and an absolute reduction of 36%. Aspirin prevented 4 fatal PE per 1000 patients, representing a proportional reduction of 58% with no apparent effect of deaths from any other vascular cause.

Scientists at Bayer reported that regular aspirin took 100 minutes to work and the reformulated Bayer Advanced aspirin took 49 minutes. Fasprin, a low dose 81mg aspirin tablet that dissolves in the mouth takes 5 minutes to get into the bloodstream.

In USA Today (7/29/03), reporting on airline DVT cases in federal court held that “an airline is liable if a passenger suffers death or bodily injury in an accident while on board an aircraft or while embarking or disembarking” and “the court define the ‘accident’ as the airlines failure to warn passengers of the health risks.”