TRAVEL FATIGUE & JET LAG RECOMMENDATIONS

Team USA Athletes travel frequently, sometimes across long distances (3+ time zones) resulting in travel fatigue and jet lag.

Travel fatigue is the result of the acute or cumulative psychological, physiological and physical effects of repetitive travel across a season.

Jet lag occurs after crossing 3 or more time zones rapidly, leading to short term circadian desynchronization, or misalignment between our internal body clock and the time of day at our destination.

When traveling frequently and/or across long distances the goal is to minimize physiological strain and vulnerability to illness and to maximize performance. The following recommendations combine research and interdisciplinary consensus to minimize the impact of travel fatigue and jet lag on athlete health and performance.

PLAN WELL

- When booking, if possible, consider options that:
  - Preserve sleep (i.e. departure times that don't interrupt sleep)
  - Minimize physiological stress (fewer stopovers, comfortable seating, upgrade if possible)
  - Include a plan for food and rest (lounges, food options etc.)
  - Traveling west: time flight to minimize sleep deprivation
- Work with your team medical provider to plan dose and timing of melatonin if relevant
- Plan training load and intensity before travel to allow for expected relative rest associated with travel
- Trial any new equipment you plan to use (sleep mask, ear plugs, etc.) before you leave.

PRACTICE ILLNESS PREVENTION THROUGHOUT TRAVEL



Wash hands often/use hand sanitizer



Sanitize surfaces with wipes



Wear a KN95 mask when in crowded spaces (e.g. bus, train, indoors)



Practice food and water safety

Before You Leave (3-4 days pre-departure)

SLEEP

- ***Leave well rested.*** Extend your sleep or add naps to pay down any sleep debt, try extending your sleep window by 30–60 min for several nights pre-departure. Avoid using flights to "catch up" on sleep or restricting sleep to "sleep on the plane"
- Traveling west 3+ time zones: align with destination time by shifting your sleep window later by 30–60 min per day if it won't shorten your sleep
- Traveling east 3+ time zones: align with destination time by shifting your sleep window earlier by 30–60 min per day if it won't shorten your sleep

NUTRITION & HYDRATION

**Consult your sports dietitian for more specific fueling plans while traveling.*

Prepare for international travel by packing familiar fueling, hydration, and supplement options. Pack more than you think you'll need in your carry on in case of travel delays or limited food options.

Carbohydrate sources:

Instant oatmeal | Grain-free bars | Bobo's bites/bars | UCAN bars | RXBARs | KIND/Nut bars | Clif/fig bars | Honey Stinger Energy Waffles | Fruit snacks/bars | PROBAR gels | Dried fruit | Applesauce or fruit pouches | Honey | Jelly | Electrolyte powder (Drip Drop, Skratch, Pedialyte)

Protein sources:

Tuna, salmon, chicken packets | GF beef sticks | Jerky packets | EPIC bars | Peanut or almond butter | Nuts and seeds | Protein powder (NSF certified) | Protein bars (>10 grams of protein)

Supplements/Ergogenic (NSF Certified/Informed Choice for Sport):

Beet juice | Beta-alanine | Caffeine | Creatine | Electrolytes | Immune supplements | Probiotics | Melatonin (Klean Athlete, Thorne, and Momentous: 0.5–3 mg dose) | Sodium bicarbonate | Whey/Plant-based protein powder

MOVEMENT & TRAINING

- Avoid exercise or training during periods of recommended sleep time
- Switch from long-duration training to moderate training intensity of medium duration (30–60 min)
- Work with your team physiologist or strength & conditioning provider for appropriate taper

During Flight

Rest or sleep in line with destination time, follow fueling and hydration plan, be hyper-hygienic



SLEEP

- Take naps when appropriate based on time at destination
- Use sleep aids (eye-masks, earplugs or noise-cancelling headphones, neck pillow)
- Avoid screen time during planned nap or sleep windows, even if you can't sleep
- Use blue light glasses during night in destination
- If appropriate, use approved melatonin (Klean Athlete, Thorne, and Momentous NSF Certified for Sport, 0.5–3 mg) 1-2 hours before desired bedtime to synchronize circadian rhythm



NUTRITION & HYDRATION

- Avoid alcohol
- Avoid caffeine after 3 p.m. or within 6 hours of your planned bedtime.
- Consume regular meals
- Practice food and water safety



MOVEMENT & TRAINING

- Wear medical-grade compression socks/ tights and comfortable clothing in layers
- If not during a sleep window, move every 2 hours (mobility in seat, or if able move from seat to stand and stretch)
- During stopovers increase circulation: mobility exercises at seat, stretch, walk if able

After Arrival

Use the available time givers (light exposure, meals, exercise) to entrain your body clock to local time; Prioritize morning sunlight exposure daily (go for a morning walk before breakfast). Get sunlight during training, if possible, even in overcast conditions. Align meals with local time.

SLEEP

- Use naps strategically in alignment with destination night 20–90 min. duration and be out of bed by 3 p.m.
- Melatonin – NSF Certified for Sport (Klean Athlete, Thorne, or Momentous brands), 0.5–3 mg; Use 1–2 hours before desired bedtime
- Practice sleep hygiene:
  - Set room temperature to <66 °F/19 °C
  - Use eye masks, earplugs or noise-cancelling headphones
  - Dim lights and engage in wind-down routine 1 hour prior to sleep
  - Avoid activating screen time 60 minutes before bed (turn off social media and technology)
- Take a hot shower prior to going to bed to reduce core body temperature and aid sleep onset

NUTRITION & HYDRATION

- Hydrate well throughout the day
- Adjust meals to align with the destination time zone
- Use caffeine strategically, not within 6 hours of bedtime
- Use third-party tested for sport melatonin at pre-planned time and dose

MOVEMENT & TRAINING

- Light exercise on arrival day

USOPC SLEEP HUB

Visit USOPC.org/Sleep for more resources