

Taking care of airplane ear

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It's worse for some more than others - that annoying and sometimes painful blockage in your ears when taking off or landing in an airplane.

The medical name for airplane ear is ear barotrauma or barotitis media. It's when air pressure in your [middle ear](#) and [air pressure](#) in the environment are out of balance. Signs and symptoms may include pain in one ear, slight hearing loss or a stuffy feeling in both ears. This is caused by your eardrum bulging outward or retracting inward as a result of the change in pressure.

To prevent or reduce airplane ear:

- Use a decongestant. Take a decongestant about 30 minutes to an hour before takeoff and 30 minutes to an hour before landing. This may prevent blockage of your eustachian tube. If you have heart disease, a [heart rhythm disorder](#) or [high blood pressure](#), or if you've experienced possible medication interactions, avoid taking an oral decongestant unless your doctor approves.
- During the flight, suck candy or chew gum. This encourages swallowing, which helps open your eustachian tube.
- Don't sleep during ascents and descents. If you're awake during ascents and descents, you can do the necessary self-care techniques.
- Give infants and children fluid. Drinking fluids during ascents and

descents encourages swallowing. Decongestants should not be used in infants or young children.

- Try the Valsalva maneuver to unplug your ears. Gently blow, as if blowing your nose, while pinching your nostrils and keeping your mouth closed. Repeat several times, especially during descents, to equalize the pressure between your [ears](#) and the airplane cabin.

- Look for specially designed filtered earplugs. These earplugs slowly equalize the pressure against your eardrum during ascents and descents. Read more about self-management for airplane ear.

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