

# Back/Neck Pain and Flying

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If you are about to travel and you have recently suffered from an episode of back/neck pain then it is strongly advised that you are well prepared for each flight. Experience suggests that if you are not pro-active then you can be at high risk of a pain flare up during or when you get off your flight. **Do not wait for the pain to build up!** The information below is particularly useful for those suffering from flexion-related back/neck pain (e.g. those who get pain from sitting, bending forward, reading etc).

## Things to consider:

❖ Remain positive. It is unlikely that you will break a bone or cause any major spinal structural damage by sitting on a plane	√
❖ When you are awake GET UP every 15-20 minutes	√
❖ If you have pain control stretches then repeat them every 30-60 minutes. Do not wait for the pain to build up – be proactive!	√
❖ Seek advice from your doctor regarding medication for pain relief and sleep. It is better to be prepared as it can be difficult to get quality medical advice in some countries overseas	√
❖ If you have neck pain try wrapping a towel around your neck or taking a neck support with you. It is advised you trial this at home first!	?
❖ Be aware of your posture not just on the plane but when waiting for the plane and queuing in customs	√
❖ Keep well hydrated and eat healthy	√
❖ Have a pain flare up plan. Discuss this with your physiotherapist	√
❖ Sit with a lumbar roll (cushion, jersey, towel) behind your lower back	?
❖ If you have back pain and you are waiting around airports then consider rest positions (e.g. lying face down over a pillow or lying on your back with your feet up on a chair)	?
❖ Book an aisle seat. A letter from your doctor may assist you in obtaining a seat upgrade	√
❖ Have airline personnel carry your luggage for you and/or lift it into the overhead bin for you. Contacting your airline in advance is advised	√
❖ Consider using a bag with wheels on it	√
❖ Learn a relaxation exercise. Controlled breathing from your diaphragm has been shown to assist in pain control and decrease tension	√
❖ If your back pain is acute then a back brace may be useful during the flight	?

**Consider using a bag with wheels on it:**



**If you have neck pain consider taking a neck support brace with you:**



**Bend your knees when lifting baggage from the floor:**



**Consider rest positions when waiting at airports:**



*This educational hand-out was developed by Peter Halstead in 2012. The content is based on the most up-to-date research available at the time and it is reviewed on a yearly bases. The information contained is for the general public. If you have current pain or issues with your health please discuss this with your health professional prior to beginning the exercises discussed. If you have any questions regarding the content of this hand-out please contact Peter at [www.PTPete.co.nz](http://www.PTPete.co.nz)*

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