

## PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

### ADVICE FOR FLYING

**Andrew Foreman**

Staff Specialist  
Royal Adelaide Hospital

Senior Lecturer  
University of Adelaide

Provider No. 262436LW  
ABN 11 387 068 348

#### Why is flying a problem for my ears?

- Flying involves significant pressure changes which can affect the ears
- The Eustachian tube connects the ear to the back of the nose and it is the 'pressure regulator' which equalizes the pressure in the middle ear
- If it doesn't work then pressure will 'build-up' in the ear and can cause pain
- This is most common when descending in to land when the changes in pressure are too rapid for the Eustachian tube to compensate

#### What are my options to prevent pain when descending in a plane?

1. **Medications** to improve Eustachian tube function
2. **Devices** to aid pressure regulation
3. **Surgery** to bypass the Eustachian tube's function

#### What medications help?

1. **Nasal Decongestants** (e.g. Otrivin, Drixine)
  - 2 sprays, both nostrils, 3 times a day
  - Use this *on the day of flying*, especially 15 minutes before descent
  - These are available over the counter
2. **Nasal steroid spray** (e.g. Nasonex, Rhinocort, Avamys)
  - 1 spray both nostrils, twice a day
  - Use this *regularly for 2 weeks* before flying
  - Nasonex is now available over the counter

#### What devices are available?

- Earplanes
  - These are specially designed earplugs. They are made of silicone and have a ceramic pressure regulator within them
  - They reduce the pressure differential enabling the Eustachian tube to work more effectively
  - They are available over the counter and come in adult and kids sizes (age 1-11)

#### What are the surgical options?

- Grommet insertion is the best way to avoid ear pain when flying
- But it does require an operation and generally would only be recommended for people who have trialed other options and who need to fly regularly
- You can read more about the operation of grommet insertion at:  
[www.ForemanENT.com.au/grommet-insertion](http://www.ForemanENT.com.au/grommet-insertion)
- Or we can discuss this further at your consultation



Dr Andrew Foreman  
Dr Michael Switajewski  
Dr Paul Varley  
Dr Michael Jay

30 Flinders Street  
Kent Town SA 5067  
tel. 08 7200 2539  
fax. 08 8363 3083  
email. [foreman@entsa.com](mailto:foreman@entsa.com)  
website. [ForemanENT.com.au](http://ForemanENT.com.au)