



Air Travel and Pregnancy



Flying during a normal pregnancy has not been shown to have any direct ill effects on mother or baby. Airline policies vary greatly and you may need to check with your chosen airline. In general, most airlines will allow women to fly up to 36 completed week's gestation. This may vary where a multiple pregnancy is involved. Remember that you need to be less than 36 week's gestation for the return flight.

Pregnancy alone predisposes women to complications such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolus (clot to the lungs). Other medical conditions such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension and thrombophilia may further increase the risk for women. These complications are also more common with long haul flights.

The use of compression stocking is advised and women should get up and stretch their legs hourly. This occurs normally in any case, as the pregnant bladder needs to be emptied regularly.

Women need to consider whether air travel is necessary. Before 24 week's gestation there is nothing that can be done to save the baby if born prematurely. After 24 completed week's gestation, babies can survive and all available resources are used. Be sure you have adequate travel insurance to cover medical emergencies.

You should also be prepared to stay in a foreign place for up to 3 months. It may take this long for a premature baby to be fit to fly home. Accommodation expenses in this case may not be covered by your insurance. The husband or partner often needs to come home to return to work as the medical bills start to arrive. Mothers are left behind with their babies in a foreign country. This puts enormous pressure on the family unit, which often requires support from counsellors.

The take home messages are to think carefully before you commit to flying during pregnancy and talk to your doctor about your specific risks when flying during pregnancy.