

Three Ways to Deal with the Ear Pain when Flying

Every time I fly in an airplane my ears used to ache on take off and landing. The pain in my ears was caused by the change in altitude and cabin pressure. Being an acupuncturist I figured there had to be a point on the body that would ease the pain. In this article I'm here to share with you a simple way to release the pressure and pain inside the ear when changing altitudes in a plane or mountain travel.

Now if you've ever been on a plane and upon take off or landing have experienced that stabbing pain inside your ear, you know this can be a very painful and frightening sensation. No wonder small babies, with very sensitive and small ears, cry so much as the cabin pressure changes. The pressure inside your ears and outside your head is changing faster than your body can adjust for it. Your ears tend to clog, it becomes harder to hear and there's the ever present pain to deal with. Not much fun.

So here are three simple recommendations to help deal with the pain of pressure changes:

1. **Swallowing.** Eat something that is flavorful or juicy like a mint or chew some gum that will keep you swallowing. That is the reason mother's give their babies a bottle at take off. Sometimes this alone is enough to help. But if you have allergies or nasal congestion and are plugged up you will need to do more.
2. **Acupressure.** There are several points on the head, hand and wrist that will relieve the pressure in the ears.
 - The first point is located on the hand between the ring finger and the little finger. Feel between and above the 2 knuckles on the back of the hand you will find a small area that is between the bones that you can press. If you keep the hand relaxed it will allow the point to "open up". If you lay your hand flat, palm down it will be easier to find. It might feel tender when you press so be aware if you are doing this for a child.
 - Press on the point with one finger as you take a breath in and out. Hold the pressure on this point for 3 breaths then let go. Repeat this two more times.
 - You can do this on the other hand or use pressure points on your ears if this point doesn't work.
 - Find a spot in front of the ear lobe and a spot just behind the ear lobe that you can press on in the same way you did the finger pressure point.
 - Try opening and closing your mouth while you are pressing on these head points. And continue to swallow. These 3 actions will help normalize the pressure in your ears.
3. **The last point** is on the forearm in the area just above the wrist. Place your hand in your lap palm down. Then measure 3 fingers width above the wrist crease. Where the three fingers end is a space between the 2 bones that can be pressed. This will help ease the pressure the same way as the ear and finger points did. Find the spot that works best for you or use all three points in combination.

So the next time you are on a plane or driving in the mountains and you experience difficulties with your ears, try one of the 3 simple methods to relieve the pain. I especially encourage parents to show their young children how to do this as it can make a big difference with their small, still developing ears and influence their experience with air travel.