



## Essential Medications for Long Flights: A Nurses Guide

### Description

“Spectacular achievement is always preceded by unspectacular preparation.”  
*Robert H. Schuller*

**It is all about preparation; learn what meds you need for common health issues arising during flights and long travel days.**

Are you a minimalist packer? I offer you congrats because I am not. This article is especially for you but will serve everyone. As a nurse, I will pack for all the what-ifs. That has served me well when I have been injured (embarrassingly too often) or ill while abroad. It has also benefited people who travel with me and strangers along the way. Most of us have been on those flights when we hear that scary overhead announcement: Is there a doctor, nurse, or EMT on the plane? I have answered that call several times and am glad I had something to help. I also sat next to people who were miserable during their day of travel, and they had nothing on them to alleviate their symptoms.

Luckily, I could offer those people something to help ease their discomfort. In the case of family and friends who travel with me, they know not to worry about that, and it reduces what they have to pack. This is especially the case for Ryan, co-owner of Wanderers Compass. On our next trip, though, I have to leave before him, and he will meet me in Munich a couple of weeks later for Oktoberfest. Since he usually doesn't carry meds like I do, I contemplated how I could prepare him a travel med packet that is small but complete. It was easier than I thought, and I realized I should share this with our readers, too. So here is this simple yet effective travel tip on essential medications for long flights so you are prepared for the most likely scenarios.



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**\*Though all the meds we discuss are over-the-counter, it does not mean it is safe for YOU. ALWAYS check with your medical care provider (not Dr. Google) that you have no contraindications for any of these meds. \***



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## Let's go over the most common issues that arise during flights or long days of travel

- Headache or body aches
- Motion/air sickness
- Acid Indigestion
- Nausea
- Sore neck or back from sitting for extended periods.

- Diarrhea
- Coughing or sore throat
- Cold symptoms/Sinus issues

All the above can make for a long and miserable day of travel that may start your trip on a sour note. Being able to manage these things can make all the difference. An over-the-counter med can reduce or eliminate most of these issues, and you can arrive at your destination ready to hit the ground running.

***Is there a way to avoid all these issues? Travel preparation should begin in the weeks before you travel. Check out our article on travel health [here](#).***

**What medications for a long flight should be readily handy?**

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**The list below is the essential medications for long flights I always have on hand, whether traveling for a two-hour flight or a 24-hour travel day.**

**Ibuprofen, Aspirin, or Naproxen (also known as Aleve)**

Not all, just one of them. I prefer Ibuprofen (also known as Advil) myself. These are all NSAIDS and can not be taken together. If you are on a prescription NSAID, you can not take these if your physician contraindicates it.

**Tylenol/Acetaminophen**

This is a pain and fever-reducing medication. It can be used along with an NSAID unless you have a contraindication. For that sore back or back headache, it comes in handy.

**Tums**

I get one of the small rolls as it fits nicely into the Ziploc bag and doesn't turn into powder. This is good for an acid stomach or indigestion.

**Alka Seltzer**

That airplane meal is not sitting well? This is the best thing for an unhappy tummy. Remember, it has aspirin, so you can not take other NSAIDs simultaneously.

**Dramamine or Meclizine**



These are for motion sickness. The picture shows a small container of Dramamine, but I prefer Meclizine as it is non-drowsy. But if you want to sleep too, Dramamine will help that.

**Benadryl**

This has many uses, and I am never without some nearby. First, if someone has an allergic reaction, this will be the first avenue to help, especially at 37,000 feet. It also can be used for a runny nose or sleep aid. For some people, it works well for nausea but will make you drowsy. If you are nauseous and want to sleep, it is a good choice.

**Pepto Bismol**

This helps with nausea and indigestion. It can reduce diarrhea. It doesn't cause drowsiness.

#### Loperamide

This medicine is for the treatment of diarrhea. As we know, that can strike at any time. If during air travel, it is challenging. Loperamide usually stops it quickly.

#### Cough/Throat drops

I have been on flights when I started developing a cough or sore throat. Often, it is the dry air. These will help along with some water.

#### Sudafed

This is a nasal decongestant. At times, on the day of travel, you have exhausted yourself so much that you now have a stuffy nose. The biggest concern here is your ears. If I have any congestion, I take it 1/2 hour before take-off and 1/2 hour before descent. Anyone with congested ears knows how bad the pain can get in an airplane, so it is best to be prepared.

#### Moisturizing eye drops

Dry eyes can be so rough on a plane and also impact sleep. I like the small single-use containers in the picture.

#### Lib Balm



This isn't a medication, but I get badly chapped lips on long flights. Having lip balm keeps the lips from cracking, leading to more issues like bleeding or infection.

**Sounds like a lot of medications for a long flight. What matters is you are prepared, and it all fits into a 4x3 in a zip bag, as you see in the image. You can use a sandwich baggy, but I find**

them too big, thin, and not compact. The bag I use efficiently fits in your hand's palm or a pocket. You are fully prepared for the most common health scenarios while traveling.

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OTC

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Over  
The  
Counter

### *Complete List of OTC Essential Medications for Long Flights*

- Ibuprofen, Aspirin, or Naproxen
- Tylenol/Acetaminophen
- Tums
- Alka Seltzer
- Dramamine or Meclizine
- Benadryl
- Pepto Bismol
- Loperamide
- Cough/throat drops
- Sudafed
- Moisturizing eye drops
- Lip Balm

### Things to consider when packing essential medications for long flights – Safety First

If you are traveling with kids, please make sure they don't have access to any medications. With all meds, that is the case.



Tylenol

Note prescription meds should not be transported this way. They must be labeled with the prescription on the container when traveling, especially internationally.

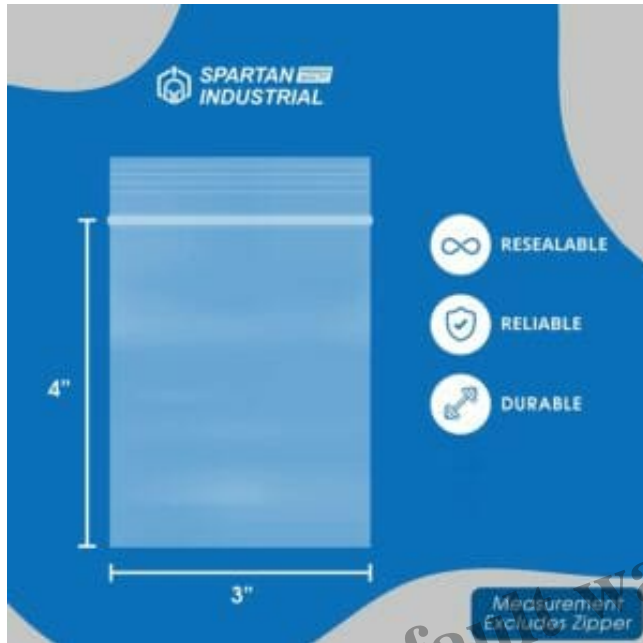
If you are uncomfortable not having some of the meds labeled, you can buy individually wrapped Tylenol, Benadryl, Aleve, and Ibuprofen on [Amazon](#) or in most pharmacies. Most medications in the image were labeled.

Always follow package instructions unless you have been told otherwise by your medical provider.

People often ask what medications they can take on the plane. The answer is pretty much anything. Over-the-counter meds have no restrictions unless they are liquids over 3 ounces or the meds can't cross state borders. You can bring any prescription medication as long as you have the prescription to document they are yours. Internationally, it can vary if you are going someplace any of these drugs are

banned, so that may well be worth researching.

## What are these little zip bags seen in the images?



This is one of my favorite finds in recent years. I buy them on Amazon and have used them for years. My favorite use is for my daily vitamins on a trip. I grab a minibag on the way to breakfast; no time is wasted sorting them out daily. They are great if you take collagen powder or Metamucil daily. Saves space and time. They are thick, and the ziplock works very well. I also find many other uses, such as premeasured spices I need when cooking at someone else's home. These bags are great for kids' snack bags, holding small office supplies, jewelry, and charging cables, to name a few ideas.



A box of 200 is around \$7.00. They have become perfect for your essential medications for long flights



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**Final Thoughts**

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World map medicine

If you embark on a dream trip, this travel tip on what essential medications for long flights will serve you well. It will help ensure your journey starts on the right foot. It takes little room, and it prepares you for any likely scenarios that will occur. Traveling feeds the soul while seeing the wonders this beautiful world offers. Being comfortable and healthy will make it even more remarkable—happy and healthy travels.

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