

How to Get Fat When You Fly

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It's very easy to get fat when you fly. Traveling, especially via airplane, may be one of the best possible methods for you to pack a few extra pounds on your waistline.

Think about it. Not only are you sedentary for long periods of time in the car, shuttle van, airport terminal, airplane and taxi, but you're also dehydrated (water is completely necessary for the fat burning process), living off packaged food products (the body takes any not-metabolized preservatives in those packages and stores them as fat cells), and slightly stressed (cortisol, the body's stress release hormone, triggers fat storage).

Wow, what a great 1-2-3 combo for individuals with lofty fat gain goals!

As a case study on the success of a person trying to get fat while flying, let's follow Laura (a real client of mine) from her home to her final destination. Laura's name has been changed to protect her identity, but these travel tidbits were gleaned from Laura's online nutrition log and our e-mail discussion afterwards.

Laura's flight leaves at 10am. She is very careful from the time she wakes to the time she drives to the airport to avoid any purposeful physical activity, as this will enhance her body's natural metabolic rate for up to 24 hours and cause her to burn more calories every hour she sits on the airplane. Although she could go for a brief 20 minute walk or jog, perform 5 sets of 20 jumping jacks while she listens to the morning news, or do a brief 15 minute body weight exercise circuit, she instead checks her e-mail, check in online for her flight, and makes two phone calls. These are activities she could have done at the airport, but she was able to avoid exercise by performing them at home.

Laura did not eat breakfast. This was an especially good idea, because she shut down the body's natural calorie burning process and sent a message to her brain that caloric restriction was present and fat storage may be a necessary mode of action. This way, everything she eats the rest of the day is more likely to be stored as fat, and she will have a good appetite once beginning travel.

Before leaving for the airport, Laura double checks her bag to make sure she hasn't packed any food from home. Although she could have put some sugar snap peas in a ziplock bag, wrapped an apple in a paper towel to keep in her purse, grabbed another small baggie of almonds for long term energy, and included some mint gum to keep her from mindless snacking on the plane, she instead departs with calorie-free luggage.

At the airport, while waiting for her flight to leave, Laura is very careful to continue avoiding engagement in physical activity. She does make sure to purchase a latte, which will give her 200 calories of nutritionally devoid fuel and help to further dehydrate her body, and she does sit and read the paper. Although she could have had a cup of green tea with a teabag from home and free cup of hot water from the coffee-shop, with far less caffeine than coffee, and although she could have read the paper on the plane, where she would be forced to sit, and although she could have performed some light stretching or calisthenics in the empty gate at C9, she is trying to successfully gain fat, and cannot make these choices without risking a metabolism boost.

Finally, Laura is on the plane for the first 3 hour flight to Denver, where she has a 1 hour layover, followed by a 1.5 hour flight to Phoenix. While on the plane, Laura asks for cranberry juice. This was a mistake in her fat-gain plan. She thought cranberry juice was healthy and was making an attempt not to gain fat too quickly with this choice. However, as it turns out, the cranberry juice was a perfect decision because it will rapidly boost her blood sugar, causing an immediate insulin release, and sending her body directly into fat storage mode. Success!

Laura is very hungry now. She doesn't realize that the large spike in insulin caused a quick drop in blood sugar and sent her appetite through the roof. Whatever has happened, she knows she is in a perfect situation to gain fat by making a dietary decision based on appetite cravings rather than rational choice. She takes one extra bag of pretzels. The pretzels say low-calorie and fat-free, but the body responds to pretzels the same way as cranberry juice. Laura is glad she did not pack food for the plane, because otherwise, she would have been equipped to avoid these fat-gain decisions, and might have instead simply opted for a glass of sparkling water with a lemon wedge, to drink with her apple and almonds.

Laura is very careful to avoid the "Rule of 1 Hour-1 Minute" on the airplane. This rule clearly dictates that you cannot sit for more than 1 hour on an airplane without standing for at least 1 minute and performing some form of a simple stretch or exercise, such as an 20 shoulder shrugs, 10 toe raises, or 15 body weight squats in the lavatory. This is a very good way to keep the metabolism elevated while traveling, and Laura must avoid that.

In the Denver airport, Laura goes to the Chinese food vendor. She orders a vegetable-chicken bowl on whole wheat noodles. This bowl begins with whole wheat noodles that have been given a chance to absorb 200 extra calories of vegetable oil, high in free radicals and fats. The noodles, while appearing to be healthy with the "whole-wheat" label, actually have the same glycemic index as white bread, meaning that there is no difference in consuming the noodles vs. consuming 10 spoonfuls of table sugar. Many whole wheat products are like this, but Laura still feels slightly guilty about the whole wheat noodles, because it sounds healthy.

Over the whole wheat noodles are piled a 1/4 cup of vegetables (also drenched in the vegetable oil and seasoned with MSG), as well as a 1/4 cup of hormone-infused chicken breast (which will help infuse synthetic fat-gaining estrogens into her body). Laura lightly seasons this meal with high-sodium soy sauce (which will help to raise her blood pressure, a good side objective while gaining fat).

This was an easy choice for Laura's fat gain goals. Such an easy choice, in fact, that she didn't even notice the dangerous alternative - the small bag of almonds and raisins for sale at the Starbuck's across the airport aisle, which would have been paired nicely with a cup of white tea sprinkled with cinnamon and perhaps a banana or apple from the basket of fresh fruit besides the cashier machine. Had she made these observations, she would have severely hampered her fat gain goals.

She made sure to take the walking belt and the escalators to her next gate, avoiding stairs and long periods of physical activity, although this would have been a perfect time to walk and make the phone calls that she made while skipping exercise earlier that morning.

The next flight offered a small meal. Laura had completely avoid logging onto the internet and requesting a "diabetic" meal on her flight. Although she isn't technically a diabetic, she would have been likely to receive a meal with low-glycemic index food and healthier vegetable based alternatives, and this would have disrupted her fat gain while flying. The actual food was nasty. It would clearly have helped her gain fat, but she couldn't stomach the taste. She had a diet coke instead, which was full of artificial sweeteners to help boost her insulin levels and cause appetite cravings.

Finally, Laura arrived in Phoenix, still full of these convenient appetite cravings from the diet coke. She didn't want to spend money on expensive food at the airport, and waited to eat until catching the shuttle to the rental car terminal, filling out the rental car paperwork, driving 10 miles, and finally stopping at a shopping mall complex, where she went to TCBY's frozen yogurt for her favorite treat and a reward for a long day of travel. During the course of this time, she might have been able to eat those sugar snap peas to fill her with fiber and keep her appetite satiated, so it was a good thing she didn't bring those along! She ordered the "fat-free" cappuccino flavor, which was the equivalent of eight additional tablespoons of insulin-boosted sugar. She had peanuts for a topping, which is a legume known for containing large amounts of aflatoxin, another great way to gain fat cells. She made sure to avoid drinking water with this snack, as she knew her dehydration would severely inhibit fat burning.

With the quick drop in blood sugar from the huge insulin release, she finally arrived at her hotel 45 minutes later starved and ready for a late night snack at the hotel restaurant. She ordered a 1400 calorie chicken-Caesar salad and sat back contented to have successfully gotten very fat while flying. She was very sure not to order her dressing on the side, not to ask for the chicken grilled instead of fried, and not to ask the waiter to leave off the Parmesan cheese, as this would have cut the salad calories by 60%.

Good job Laura! A successful day of getting fat while you fly.

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