

Jet Lag Syndrome: Using Horary Points to Relieve the Symptoms of Jet Lag

The great explorers, DeGama, Magellan and Captain Cook, voyaged many thousands of miles and endured hardships unimaginable to modern travelers. About the only discomfort they did not experience was the kind of daze modern jet travelers feel as they zoom across the sky and time zones at near mach one speeds. Jet lag syndrome is the term given to a number of symptoms that we experience under these conditions.

The debilitating effects of jet lag may include extreme fatigue, nausea, headache, reduced memory, attention lapse and overall disturbed sleep patterns.

The Circadian Cycle

The body has many rhythms that govern our lives. Babies are most often born late at night; heart attacks peak at 10 a.m. Almost every aspect of our lives is timed. We have many internal biological "clocks." Those that pertain to a 24-hour period are referred to as circadian cycles (the Latin circa, meaning about, and dies, meaning day). The most familiar of these cycles is the sleep/awake cycle.

Jet lag occurs when our body's natural daily (circadian) rhythm becomes disoriented. Until the body readjusts to the new time zone, many people experience jet lag syndrome. Laboratory tests cite suggestive evidence that cells "keep time," showing regular cyclic activity even when they're isolated in lab cultures and cut off from outside stimuli. Scientists have been studying cells to locate the mainspring mechanism responsible for this clockwork precision.

Light and darkness (our diurnal cycle) trigger the sleep/awake cycle. Our bodies are accustomed to night descending at a certain time each day. Scientists and doctors know that the rate of secretion of many hormones is linked to a 24-hour cycle. In fact, the hormone melatonin is produced while we sleep and fades at daylight; bright light turns off the hormone. Melatonin is secreted from the pineal gland, which is the timekeeper of the brain, and helps govern the sleep-wake cycle. Jet lag occurs when the circadian rhythm uncouples with the diurnal rhythm.

Chinese medicine has long studied the body's rhythms. The development of acupuncture is based on these acute observations. Chinese medicine noted the body's different energy centers.

During a 24-hour period, certain energy centers are at a high point, while others are at a low point. Imagine you are riding a Ferris wheel. At certain times you are at the top; at other times you are at the bottom. The body has an energetic cycle. In relation to our body, the Ferris wheel represents the body's meridian system. Throughout the diurnal cycle, certain areas of the meridian system are going to be at the high point of the wheel, while other parts (meridians) will be at the low point. Of course, the body's "Ferris wheel" turns slowly. It takes 24 hours for it to complete one full turn.

The body has 12 different meridians. The end of one of these is connected to the beginning of the next,

so they are all connected and form a closed loop like the Ferris wheel. In 24 hours, you will spend two hours in each of the 12 meridians and end up where you started.

When the chi (life force energy) is in a certain meridian, say the lung meridian, we say that it is at its energetic peak. This two-hour peak is the "horary period." Twelve hours later, that meridian will be at its lowest energy level. One 24-hour cycle around the body's Ferris wheel is called a "horary cycle." In the West, we call this cycle our biological clock, diurnal, or circadian cycle.

The 12 different meridians are named after organs (liver, lung, etc.) with the exception of two, which are named triple heater and circulation sex. The ancient Chinese calculated which was at its peak during the 24-hour period. If we start at 3:00 a.m., the lung meridian is at its horary period for two hours. Two hours later, the large intestine meridian takes over as the most energized, and holds that position for another two hours. Others follow suit and continue around the circuit. The last in the cycle is the liver meridian, which is at its energetic zenith from 1:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m. Then the cycle begins again. This horary period is in relation to the position of the sun.

The biological clock must either speed up (when we move from east to west) or back up (when we move from west to east). Individuals who have high energy levels in their meridian system experience minimal symptoms when flying long journeys. Other individuals are not as fortunate. The best treatment for individuals suffering from jet lag is to balance the meridian system. Stimulating (massaging) specific horary points on the body allows the energy to transfer from one meridian to another, thus helping the biological clock update itself in mid-flight.

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