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### Flying may be slowly killing you

By: Alisa Wolfson | June 22, 2017

A new study says the contaminated air on planes can result in health problems. Racking up airline miles might be good for your status, but it's not so good for your health. There's a clear link between exposure to air contaminated by engine oil and other aircraft fluids — which is what you're breathing in when you're traveling on a plane — and a variety of health problems, according to a study published this week in the World Health Organization's journal *Public Health Panorama*. These include headaches, dizziness, breathing and vision problems, hearing loss, cardiovascular disease and a slew of other symptoms.

"Even low levels of air contaminated by this complex mixture can damage the lung lining and potentially make a person more susceptible to pulmonary conditions," **Dr. Robert Huizenga**, an internist and associate professor of clinical medicine at UCLA, tells Moneyish. And, according to Live Science, the risk of catching a cold is 100 times higher when you're flying as well.

How bad is the air up there? Vyvyan Howard, a professor of pathology and toxicology at the University of Ulster is quoted in the report saying, "We know from a large body of toxicological scientific evidence that such an exposure pattern can cause harm, and, in my opinion, explains why aircrew are more susceptible than average to associated illness."

And it's not just pilots and flight attendants that can get sick from the air: Frequent fliers are vulnerable too. Anyone who flies more than a few times a year and is repeatedly exposed to the toxins risks suffering from a barrage of potential illnesses.

Dr. Huizenga suggests that frequent fliers are also prone to insomnia, cervical disc problems, lower extremity blood clots and orthopedic shoulder and elbow problems from hoisting luggage in and out of overhead bins.

There are a few reasons 31 year-old Danielle Buxbaum left her job as a flight attendant for Virgin America. "After four years, I found being a flight attendant to be both physically and emotionally draining. I was concerned about the recycled air I was breathing and I was getting ear infections all the time," Buxbaum tells Moneyish.

Others — like private jet pilot Robert Henry, who spends up to 45 hours per month flying — aren't that concerned. "Solar radiation, circadian rhythm, fatigue, nutrition and exercise have been my health-related concerns. The air issues haven't received much attention in private jets to my knowledge," Henry tells Moneyish.

While it's unlikely that people will scrap their summer travel plans based on just one study, Dr. Huizenga says, "frequent fliers should demand cleaner air quality than can be furnished by the unfiltered air supplied to the cabins via the engine compressor."

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