

Green Tech: A breath of fresh air

Ever gotten sick on a plane? Travelers have suffered from "aerotoxic syndrome" nausea, headache, flu-like symptoms for years.

Though causes vary, one of the main culprits may be the air you breathe.

Since 1962, airlines have used recycled air in airplane cabins. And, according to British pilot-author Tristan Loraine, whose documentary *Welcome Aboard Toxic Airlines* premiered this March, much of it is unfiltered.



How do you protect yourself from this? There's a handy invention called the Plane Clean Air Filter (<http://www.planecleanair.com/index.html>) that can help.

This compact device, tested and certified in an FDA lab removes 99.5 percent of all airborne viruses, bacteria, allergens and particulates from the airstream. Forcing germs away from your face while blowing pure air directly at you, it creates what's probably the cleanest air on the plane. Easily portable, you can use this nifty blue device in almost every plane.

This invention came about 13 years ago when its creator, Neal Avery, now president of Travel Health Products, got sick flying to his honeymoon. Rarely ill, he suspected something from the flight. With his background in medical device manufacturing, he zeroed in on a filtration system that would direct air from above to a passenger's face.

The finished product is easy to use. The Plane Clean Air Filter comes with two gaskets.

Simply determine what kind of air nozzle your plane has, then screw the appropriate filter onto it. The adhesive gasket attaches the filter to the nozzle.

Each gasket lasts about five flights. According to the Web site, the filter can last longer than 10 flights, regardless of duration. And the adhesive won't leave residue on the nozzle when removed.

Most airplanes have over-the-seat air nozzles, like Airbus, Boeing and others whose nozzles have similar configurations. Some wide-body jets, however, like the Boeing 747, don't have circular nozzles over the seats, making this device unusable.

When you travel, take both gaskets with you. Attaching and detaching is simple. If you're on a Boeing-type plane, the filter comes with a centering ring to center it directly over the nozzle. For an Airbus, remove the centering ring, then place the device directly on the nozzle. When changing planes from an Airbus to a Boeing, attach or remove the centering ring as needed.

After each flight, remember to remove the filter, place it in its clamshell case and take it with you. When the adhesive loses its stickiness, just order a replacement.

Where can you find this amazingly useful travel accessory? It's not in local stores, though Travel Outfitters in Sacramento -- (916) 486-9170 -- carries them, as do Edwards Luggage stores. You have two options for buying it online. You can go to Plane Clean Air's Web site (www.plane-clean-air.com) and purchase it. Or, from that Web site, click on the Target.com box and order it. Unfortunately, it's not available at Target stores, but, Avery said, if there's ever a problem, just return it to any Target. The cost is around \$19.95. Replacement filters are \$6.95.

Debra Atlas is a freelance writer, consultant and professional speaker in Northern California. She can be reached at debraatlas@gmail.com.