

ANNE CHALFANT: TICKET TO RIDE

## Keeping travel 'cooties' at bay

ICKY, ICKY.

I hate hearing people's fears of germs when they travel. The squeamishness is contagious. In truth, I never gave a moment's thought to how often airplane seat upholstery was cleaned until somebody brought it up. Now I sink somewhat squeamishly into upholstered seats, and I'm ever so much happier on the easy-clean leather ones.

For passengers who take their dirty upholstery seriously, the inventors have been thinking up ideas. Check out "No Cooties Travel Kit" or "Flight Spray."

Both sprays are supposed to knock out airborne bacteria. The Cootie Kit comes with a bottle of hand sanitizer, which I'm a fan of. But I will also confess that I got an intestinal bacterium while on a recent Southeast Asia trip, and the only other woman who got it was also diligent with the hand sanitizer.

So remember -- cooties are a wily bunch -- there are no guaranteed preventions. No Cooties: \$17.50, Edwards Luggage, Walnut Creek and San Francisco; Flight Spray: \$14.85, [www.magellans.com](http://www.magellans.com)

### Seat sheet

But if you would like to put some distance between yourself and the passengers who occupied the airline seat before you, there is another option. Instead of spraying the air your fellow passengers breathe -- and I personally would not like to witness someone spraying an unknown substance into my air -- the alternative is to lay out a "Plane Sheet." These paper sheets are similar to the stuff your dentist bibs you with. \$13.95, Edwards Luggage

Then there's the problem of recirculated air, which many of us swear is the source of post-flight colds and flu. A new product called "Plane Clean Air" might help. It's a little nozzle with a filter that fits over the plane's overhead air-blowing nozzle. The idea is that bacteria and viruses will not blow directly on you.

This product seems like a pretty good idea -- the packaging claims it was tested in an FDA certified lab and removed 99.5 percent of bacteria and viruses.

The tricky part about this filter is remembering to remove it when you leave the plane. It comes with a second filter so you can use it again (you can buy a pack of additional filters too). \$19.95, Edwards Luggage or [www.plane-clean-air.com](http://www.plane-clean-air.com)

Another practice I've learned -- and which really seems to help -- is to use a saline spray to keep your nostrils moist while in flight. Drugstores sell this; I buy a brand called Ocean. The idea, suggested to me by a nurse, is to keep the mucous membranes moist in order to get them to stay on the job of moving viruses and bacteria out. A few sprays per flight seem to help. Airplanes, of course, are notorious for sucking the moisture out of you, and dry mucous membranes are susceptible. \$3.89 at [www.drugstore.com](http://www.drugstore.com)

### Hotel crud

OK, now I've almost reached my limits of worrying about the germ side of travel. But there's one more thing that creeps people out, and that's hotel sheets.

It's easy enough to yank the covers back in your hotel and give the sheets a quick peek -- you can tell whether a white sheet is fresh and clean. Call housekeeping for a new set if you don't like what you see.

But if you just can't stand not knowing for sure, there are lightweight sleep bags you can tuck yourself into at night. CoolMax Travelsheets are warm, and CoolMax is a fabric that wicks perspiration. The sheet stuffs into a tiny sack and could double as an in-flight blanket since few airlines provide them these days.