

Inflight indiscretions

BY BRIAR JENSEN

Slowly my mouth drops open. Gradually saliva oozes out of the corner of my lips. Oh God, I'm dribbling. Wake up!

This is one of my travel phobias. I'm terrified of embarrassing myself by dribbling snoring, passing wind or exposing myself while sleeping on a plane. Do I do all these things? I don't know for sure. But fellow passengers sitting next to me do, so I guess it's possible you or I could too, sleep brings ignorance. So, how do you stop your mouth from dropping open while you are sleeping upright on a plane? Gravity eventually rules and the bottom jaw just falls down, giving saliva a chance to sneak out. Similar to the head jerk. When you're too proud to put your head back, and you fall asleep in the vertical position, gravity causes your head to jerk forward so violently that it wakes you up.

I've learnt to combat both the mouth drop and the head jerk with one technique. I lean back in the seat with my elbow on the arm-rest, forearm vertical, and rest my chin on my fist. Perfect, until my elbow slips off the arm-rest and stabs the person sitting next to me, just as she takes a sip of coffee.

As for avoiding intestinal gas, my theory is that going to the toilet regularly must help. Which brings me to another of my fears - climbing over the person seated next to me to go to the toilet. The polite thing to do is to ask him to move out of the seat to let me pass. Perfect solution, when he's awake. But I don't have the heart to disturb someone's sleep on a long

international flight. Sleep is hard enough to come by on a plane.

So, how to hurdle my sleeping neighbour's full stretched legs? The person in front of him invariably has their seat as far back as possible, so I have to be a contortionist as well as a high jumper to get over. Do I put my backside or my boobs in the sleeping giant's face as I pass? He could wake up during any part of my less-than-ladylike traverse of his legs. If I face forward I can clutch onto the seat in front for support. But unless I get into the limbo position my backside will protrude alarmingly into the personal space of the person I'm climbing over. If I face the sleeping passenger I have to lean

perilously forward, again breaching the invisible barrier of personal space. Either way, the slightest misjudgment in my manoeuvre would be catastrophic. I'd end up with my bottom in a lap or my chest in a face.

My legs are not very long, so I'm never sure if I'll be able to straddle my neighbour's legs without coming into contact. A slight touch and he might draw his knees up during mid-crossing.

Another point to ponder is whether my skirt is loose enough for me to take such a large step. I don't consider

hoisting it up to my thighs, as I must to get into my four-wheel drive, an option in this situation. So, I prefer to wear trousers on a plane and always try for an aisle seat.

I also fear exposing myself. Not intentionally, of course, but I've seen it happen to other women passengers. There they are sleeping, totally ignorant of the fact that the hem of their skirt has worked its way up under the armpits, to expose a less-than-attractive, more-than-ample bottom to every passer-by. That's another reason for trousers on very long flights.

So I've overcome dribbling, head jerking and exposing myself, which just leaves snoring and passing wind. Oh well, ignorance is bliss.

