

Healthy Conference Tips

By Deirdre O'Sullivan-Drombolis, BScPT, MCISc (Wound Healing)

Attending a conference is exciting. You hope to return to work with a renewed sense of purpose, fresh ideas, great connections and knowledge—but not exhausted, sluggish and stiff, as is sometimes the case. Here are some great tips for getting the most out of Action 2014: Skin Health for Canada (or any other conference you are planning to attend) and avoiding the “conference blahs.”

Travel right:

Whether you are travelling by plane, train or automobile make sure you get up and move around every hour or so. Do some simple stretches in your

seat to keep your circulation going and loosen up your muscles. Pack light. Heavy bags are not only a hassle to drag around but strain muscles and joints. Use a light suitcase with wheels and if you must, use two smaller suitcases rather than one really large one.

Sit right:

You will be spending most of your day sitting so ensure you are sitting in proper alignment. Ankles, knees and hips should be at 90 degrees, with feet flat on the floor. Do not cross your legs or ankles. Ask for an extra towel and roll it up to place between the small of your back and the backrest of the chair. Keep your arms supported. Do small stretches in your chair and shift your weight frequently. If you have a sore back, stand at the back of the room against the wall for a change of position.

Move right:

Between sessions ensure you get up and move around. Go for a walk. Maintain good posture while you are walking and standing: head up, shoulders back, pelvis tilted slightly backward, slight bend in the knee and toes pointed out very slightly. If the venue has a gym, use it. Exercise will keep you feeling energized and prevent you from nodding off during sessions.

Eat right:

Try to choose healthy meals with plenty of protein and veggies. Bring your own snacks. Avoid mindless eating. Enjoy dessert in moderation. Take your vitamins. Drink plenty of water. Drink alcohol in moderation. (See Healthy Eating at Conference, page 38.)

Sleep right:

It can be tempting to stay out late visiting with old and new friends, but make sure you are getting enough rest. Lack of

Conference Tip:

Take some time away from the conference for a culture break. This year's venue is the Westin Harbour Castle in beautiful downtown Toronto. Toronto is a city rich in culture, shopping, theatre and great places to eat.

Explore the city and have a little fun!



sleep leads to poor concentration. Keep your room cool for sleeping. Sleep on the edge of the bed where it is likely to be firmest and try to use only one pillow under your head. Place a pillow under your knees if you sleep on your back or between your knees if you sleep on your side to maintain good alignment. If you do stay out late try to squeeze in a power nap or two.

Network right:

You are at a gathering of the best of the best! Use their resources to invest in yourself and build a support team. Share your knowledge and experiences. Ask questions. Speak with the presenters and moderators. Stay positive. Bring business cards to share. Ask people for their business cards. If you can, jot a few notes on the back of each card after your conversation so you remember them. Email those you truly connect with when you get home. Stay in touch.

These tips will help you to remain refreshed, energized and focused and this in turn will allow you to get the most out of the conference. 🙌

Five stretches to do in your seat

1. Gentle shoulder rolls in both directions
2. Shoulder blade pinches—pull your shoulder blades back and down
3. Chin tucks—sit up tall and gently pull your chin to your chest
4. Arching over the back of your chair—lean back over the backrest and pull your arms open wide
5. Ankle pumps—pump your feet up and down to get the circulation going



How should I dress?

Conference days can be long and staying comfortable is essential for getting the most out of the experience. Here are some tips:

1. Dress in layers. The only guarantee about the temperatures in conference venues is that they are too hot, too cold and always changing.
2. Wear clothing you have worn before so you are not surprised by fabric that itches or clothes that squeeze in the wrong places.
3. Wear comfortable, supportive shoes. The concrete floors, even with carpeting, can be hard on feet, legs and backs.
4. Use a rolling bag to keep weight off your shoulders.

