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High Flying Headaches Found Cured by Oxygen

AP Newsfeatures

WASHINGTON — Col. M. S. White, a flight surgeon, finds that airplane passengers in unpressurized cabins get headaches from flying for long periods at 9,000 to 10,000 feet altitude, but that oxygen cures the headaches.

Mental alertness, he added, apparently slows somewhat at above 10,000 feet under the same conditions.

Major airlines usually fly under 9,000 feet, but go higher with pressurized cabin planes.

Writing in the Journal of Aviation Medicine, Col. White described studies of eight persons who made a round-the-world flight in 6¼ days a year ago in the Army Air Forces Air Transport Command ship "Globester."

He said that "fatigue, headaches, diminished mental activity and many other ill-defined symptoms" resulted from rapid ascent (about 900 feet per minute) to a 9,000-foot altitude. "They are frequently experienced by individuals exposed to this altitude for periods greater than four hours."

"I believe that in any prolonged flight in an unpressurized cabin plane, supplementary oxygen should be available for passengers at altitudes as low as 8,000 feet, and oxygen should be mandatory for all passengers at altitudes of at least 10,000 feet."

Civil air regulations at present require oxygen only for members of the "operating crew" of such aircraft at heights between 10,000 and 12,000 feet, and stipulate that an "adequate supply" of oxygen must be available for passengers when the plane flies above 12,000.

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