

Flying After Diving

The pressure of diving causes nitrogen to go into solution in the blood, and it is the decrease in pressure as the diver returns to the surface that causes this nitrogen to come back out of solution over time and to bubble. A rapid ascent to the surface can cause complications as it represents too fast a transition across a pressure gradient for the body to effectively compensate for. Ascending to a high altitude after the dive is simply a continuation of your post-dive ascent to the surface and can also lead to decompression sickness.

After scuba diving, current PADI Flying After Diving guidelines say that you should not go to altitude (fly) within 12 hours of completing a single dive or 18 hours when doing multiple dives.

It's recommended that you should wait at least 12 hours after a single dive, or 24 hours after multiple dives within the no-decompression limits before you travel to more than 300m (or 1,000 feet) above sea level. Bear in mind that driving over a mountain range would also put you over this suggested altitude limit.

What about Diving after Flying?

There is no problem with diving after flying. There is no increased risk of Decompression Sickness (DCS) if you arrive on a flight and head straight to the ocean - DCS is caused by high concentration of Nitrogen in the blood after diving which can become supersaturated and form bubbles at lower pressures. Before you dive, you have a normal amount of Nitrogen in the blood. However, if you've taken a long haul flight, you may be dehydrated which is a factor in DCS. Make sure you drink plenty of non alcoholic fluids on a long flight to prevent dehydration. There is also a tendency for people to arrive in a hot country and head straight to the bar for a cold one. Please remember that alcohol contributes to dehydration, so take it easy on the alcohol.