

Motion Sickness

If you have experienced a bout of motion sickness during ground air or water travel, you know the feeling: vague discomfort becomes nausea, your face pales and you begin to sweat. Lightheadedness and exhaustion may be followed by vomiting. Some people are more prone to this condition than others, but factors such as turbulence, anxiety and illness can also trigger motion sickness.

The human body has a delicate system of equilibrium that relies on fluids in the inner ear, visual sensors and other physical input to maintain a sense of balance.

Preventive Behaviors

- Eat lightly before and during travel. Don't drink alcohol
- Sit in the most stable section of a moving vehicle to decrease motion sickness symptoms:
 - over the wings on an airplane;
 - in the front seat of a car;
 - near the front of trains;
 - on the deck of ships, if possible;
 - and just forward of the mid-section on buses.
- Face forward and look out the window, keeping your eyes fixed on the horizon or a stationary point in the distance. Stay as still as possible, and avoid any rapid eye movement.
- Sleep if you can. If you can't sleep, it may help to wear dark glasses or close your eyes to reduce visual stimulation.

Treatment Options

- Over-the-counter antihistamines such as **Dramamine** (dimenhydratate) or **Bonine** (meclizine) can prevent or relieve motion sickness. Since it is easier to prevent motion sickness than it is to stop it, medication should be taken 30-60 minutes before travel and continued during the trip. Side effects may include drowsiness, dizziness or dry mouth. Antihistamines should not be used by anyone with glaucoma, breathing problems such as asthma, or urinary difficulties such as enlarged prostate. Check labels carefully for appropriate dosages, precautions and age restrictions.
- Some people may require prescription drugs such as **scopolamine patches** if over-the-counter medications are not effective. The scopolamine skin patch can be worn for 3 days. Discuss the options with your health care provider, and make sure to ask about precautions and drug interactions.
- Other alternative options include:
 1. the "**Sea Band**" acupressure wristband, which is safe in pregnancy and is available in the Kaiser pharmacy, drugstores and diving stores.
 2. **Ginger** (candied ginger or capsules) have also been effective for some people. Ginger should **not** be used in pregnancy or by persons with gallstones or prolonged bleeding time (e.g. those on coumadin or aspirin therapy, etc.) Dosage: 1000mg (1 gm) 30 minutes prior to travel, then 500-1000 mg every 4 hours (maximum daily dose is 2-4 gm)

