



## PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

### Motion Sickness

#### Topic Overview

#### What is motion sickness?

If you've ever been sick to your stomach on a rocking boat or a bumpy airplane ride, you know the discomfort of [motion sickness](#). Although it doesn't cause long-term problems, motion sickness can make life miserable, especially for people who travel a lot.

People can feel sick from the motion in cars, airplanes, trains, amusement park rides, or on boats or ships. Motion sickness is sometimes called airsickness or seasickness. Video games, flight simulators, and looking through a microscope also can cause motion sickness. In these cases, the eyes see motion, but the body does not sense it.

Children from 5 to 12 years old, women, and the elderly seem to be more susceptible to motion sickness, while it is rare in children younger than age 2.

#### What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms of motion sickness are a general sense of not feeling well (malaise), nausea, vomiting, headache, and sweating.

#### What causes motion sickness?

Motion sickness occurs when the [inner ear](#) , the eyes, and other areas of the body that detect motion send unexpected or conflicting messages to the brain. One part of your balance-sensing system (your inner ear, vision, and sensory nerves that help you keep your balance) may indicate that your body is moving, while the other parts do not sense motion. For example, if you are in the cabin of a moving ship, your inner ear may sense the motion of big waves, but your eyes don't see any movement. This leads to a conflict between the senses and results in motion sickness.

#### What is the treatment for motion sickness?

It's best to try to prevent motion sickness, because symptoms are hard to stop once they start. Once motion sickness has developed, relief comes only after the motion has stopped. If you can't stop the motion, you may be able to reduce the feeling of queasiness by sitting or lying down in an area that appears to move the least. In an airplane, sit near the wings. On a boat or ship, stay on the deck, looking at the horizon. Or try to sit or lie down in a cabin near the center of the ship.

You also can take prescription and nonprescription medicine to prevent or reduce symptoms of

nausea and vomiting. Most medicines work best if you take them before you travel. The medicines work in different ways. Some are sedatives that minimize the effect of motion, while others reduce nausea and vomiting.

Many people try other methods of preventing motion sickness, such as taking powdered ginger capsules or wearing acupuncture wristbands. It is safe to try these methods, and they might offer some relief. But there is little evidence that they prevent motion sickness.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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