



SEASICKNESS: INFORMATION AND TREATMENT

When the human body is put into motion, be it in a boat, car, or airplane, motion sickness can be a side effect. The cause of motion sickness and its associated unpleasant symptoms are not well understood. Most medical information explains the symptoms as a result of the brain experiencing sensory confusion. The vestibular system of the inner ear sends messages to the brain about the body's position, but the changing position of the body contradicts the information relayed by the eyes. Over time most people adjust to the motion that is making them sick, once the brain determines that the confused sensory signals are the "norm" and it shuts down the nausea, cold sweats, drowsiness, and other symptoms.

The more you move around, the sooner you become accustomed to the motion of the boat. Lying down does not help you adapt, even though it may allow you to feel better temporarily. Doing anything that requires close visual focus, such as reading, will make symptoms worse and should be avoided.

There are many remedies for seasickness, some tried and true, others more eclectic. How a specific drug, either over-the-counter or prescription, will affect you is unpredictable- what works for some may not work for others. The only way to know for sure is to try it. Start with a non-prescription drug because they usually have less drowsiness side effects. If the non-prescription drugs are not effective see your doctor and request a prescription drug.

Most of the anti-nausea medication should be taken 1-2 hours before leaving the dock. Like all drugs seasick preventatives can have side effects. If you have a history of drug side effects be sure to consult your family doctor, and if possible try the drug on land before you use it at sea.

The following is a list of some of the more tested seasick remedies:

Natural Remedies:

1. **Ginger:** Raw ginger, ginger tea (made from fresh slices of ginger), pills or tablets (available in health food stores), ginger ale, ginger candy, and ginger snaps.
Ginger has a natural anti-nausea effect, which seems to alleviate some of the symptoms.
2. **Calm Seas™** Contains natural ingredients including ginger.

Chemical Remedies:

1. **Bonine:** Over the counter Meclazine.
2. **Scopolamine:** Marketed as a transdermal patch worn behind the ear.
3. **Dramamine:** Over the counter Dimenhydrinate; comes in non-drowsy formulas.
4. **Coast Guard Cocktail:** Prescription combination of 25mg each of Ephedrine and Promethazine. Also prescribed as 25mg Promethazine and 60mg Pseudoephedrine. Promethazine (also called Phenergan) is an antihistamine that prevents the motion sickness, and pseudoephedrine acts as a stimulant that counteracts the side effect of drowsiness.

Physical Remedies:

1. Minimize motion of boat: keep to the middle of the boat. If you have a window or view try to keep your vision focused on the horizon.
2. Sea Bands™: Wristbands available in nautical stores, naturopathic health stores, and some pharmacies. They work on acupressure nausea points on the wrists (called the neikuan point).

Food:

An empty stomach actually makes most people feel worse. However, try not to fill stomach with anything you wouldn't want to see again. Ginger ale and saltine crackers or toast seem to be benign.

Added Precautions:

The need to vomit is a common symptom of being nauseated. Sometimes people feel much better after doing so. Keep in mind that if you need to go out on deck or to the rail to vomit, **let someone know you are going outside!**

Although seasickness is not life threatening, if left untreated it can become serious. A few people will simply not recover from the constant nausea. Dehydration is a side effect that should be taken into account. If a person has been seasick for over 3 days, has vomited constantly, and has not eaten or drank they should be encouraged to take in fluids as much as possible. It may be necessary to get this person off the boat and to medical attention.

Seasickness is a normal consequence of putting the body into unnatural motion, and it happens to almost everybody. Keep that in mind. In most cases it does get better after a few days at sea, and symptoms lessen each time you venture out on a boat.

Smooth Sailing!

