

How to Avoid Sea Sickness

Sea Sickness:

Sea Sickness, though not a true sickness or disease, is the normal response of an individual to unaccustomed motion of sufficient intensity and duration. Its cause is thought to be a mismatch between the actual and expected sensory input your sight and hearing.

The most common symptoms include nausea, pallor, cold sweating and vomiting. In addition, burping, sighing, yawning, hyperventilation, light headedness, and somnolence may also be experienced.

Symptoms are normally of slow onset, with a sudden intensification to vomiting which can often provide a temporary improvement and relief, however followed by a cyclical recurrence if the cause for the sickness continues.

The best way I have found to avoid sea sickness, is to fix your gaze upon a stable external reference point such as the horizon or some outcrop of land. Avoid searching and scanning tasks such as reading.

Also avoid lying down as this will bring on and accelerate the onset of symptoms. Try and stay busy and don't focus on your discomfort. The intake of water helps, as well as deep breaths.

Several remedies are available, ranging from "over the counter" and prescription drugs, to the humble ginger. Perhaps one of ginger's most valuable benefits is its ability to soothe the stomach and allay feelings of nausea.

Its no embarrassment for one to become sea sick. Even some of the most experienced mariners in the world become sea sick. Taking note of the above suggestions will hopefully minimise or negate the onset of sea sickness, allowing you to enjoy your outing.

Nobody WANTS to be sick. Especially when your going out on the water for a day of fun. Do yourself a favor and prepare. There are many remedies for sea sickness and the most popular of these is also the worst. I'm referring to Dramamine ® . DON'T TAKE IT! Not only is it a poor sea sickness medication but the side effect of "sleepiness" can ruin your fun also.

Here's a list of remedies in order of effectiveness:

Scopolamine:

For the hard core "I always get sea sick" types. This remedy is also referred to as "the patch" and can be obtained by prescription from your doctor. It looks like a little round Band-Aid and is worn behind your ear. There are a certain percentage of people who have adverse side effects to this medication. I highly suggest that if you're using this remedy for the first time, try using one at home first. You don't want to find out that you have an adverse reaction to this stuff when you're several miles out at sea.

Bonine® :

This is the best pill form, over the counter remedy. Highly recommended! You need to get this stuff working in your system well in advance of your trip. The biggest mistake people make with pill form remedies is that they take their first dose either right before or right after stepping on the boat. Sea sick prone people usually spew these pills out before they can take effect. For maximum effectiveness, take one dose of Bonine® the night before your trip and another dose in the morning when you wake up. For long trips, don't forget to keep up with the recommended dosage.

Sea Band® :

These are pressure point therapy wrist bands. Most people discount this remedy because it "sounds" like a gimmick. Almost all the people I've talked to who have actually used them will swear that it works. The nice thing about this remedy is that it can be added along with any of the other remedies without conflicting with them.

Ginger:

That's right. Plain old ginger root. You can get this stuff in pill form, candied, raw, powdered, as a paste, dehydrated, in cookies.....well, you get the idea. Just like with the Sea Band®, ginger can be added along with any of the other remedies without conflicting with them. There is no "prescribed dosage" on this stuff but you might want to avoid over doing it.

Roloids®:

I always keep some on the boat for people who didn't prepare for sea sickness or didn't prepare enough. It usually helps those who are just slightly sick but it doesn't help the majority of unprepared sea sick prone people. The main thing it does for them is to help neutralize stomach acid so it doesn't burn so much on the way up.

Just one more note. Some people have a tendency to "over do" a good thing when they're on vacation. Go easy on the dinner the night before and breakfast in the morning before you go out. Don't stuff yourself. Don't get drunk the night before (hangovers are even worse out at sea) and get a good nights sleep.

Aloha, Have a great day on the water!

Avoiding sea sickness while sailing,

is easier than you might think, especially on a sailboat, rather than a power boat.

Going fishing on a power boat involves long periods of drifting, and you are subjected to roll and pitch, the smell of bait, diesel or gas exhaust fumes, and possibly fuel vapors. None of these unpleasant items is present while sailing with us! Roll is the side to side movement, pitch is the fore and aft movement. While sailing, you will always be moving, driven by the wind, in unison with the tide and swells, a very natural feeling.

Because a sailboat has a keel, (a weighted fin projected down underwater, not visible while sailing), to oppose the force of the wind, roll is eliminated. And roll, is the biggest cause of motion sickness.

At first you feel that you may die, then you worry that you won't.

Nothing can spoil a day on the water like a case of motion sickness. When it happens at sea, we refer to it as mal de mer or sea sickness. Whatever you call it, it feels miserable when it besets us. This page then is dedicated to reducing or eliminating its severity or occurrence, or possibly preventing it altogether, so we you may enjoy your sailing adventure.

What it is:

Motion sickness is a conflict between your senses. A fluid filled canal in your inner ear that controls your sense of balance tells your brain that your body is moving, while your eyes, looking into the cabin of the boat, tells your brain that you are not moving. That conflict can cause your body to be out of balance, and we know how the digestive system feels about that.

Here, we will concentrate on prevention. We will also look at the mind, body, spirit as a whole. A disharmony among them is what causes practically any illness.

If your systems are out of whack, your meals may come back.

Our metabolisms are nearly as unique as our personalities. Some preventatives will work for some people and not others. Others will work, though with varying degrees of effectiveness. You may have to do some trials and experimenting to find what works best for you. Nothing works the same for everybody.

There are two symptoms of seasickness, dizziness and nausea. Since a number of factors contribute to sea sickness and can trigger either or both parts, it makes sense to follow the following guidelines to reduce the chances of succumbing to it.

1. Get plenty of rest before you go out on the water. Weariness and exhaustion can make you more susceptible to other things that can bring on motion sickness. Do your gear preparation early the day before and take care of other business well before a proper bed time.

2. Do not eat greasy or acidic foods for several hours before your sailing adventure. This includes having coffee also. You don't want to have a lot of acid or heavy, slow to digest foods rolling around in your stomach while you are rolling around on the sea. Heavy, greasy foods like bacon and eggs, sausage, waffles or pancakes with syrup, alone or combined with acidic juices like orange juice, can wreak havoc on your system and end up recycled as lunch for fishes. Consider less acidic fruits (apples, bananas, pears, grapes, melons, etc.), breads (muffins, croissants, rolls), cereals and grains as alternatives. Milk, water, apple juice, cranberry juice and other low acid beverages are gentler alternatives to orange juice or grapefruit juice.

Caffeinated beverages (including soft drinks) should be avoided as they are diuretics (make you urinate) which accelerates dehydration. The gas in carbonated beverages has negative responses in some, avoid them also.

3. Do not skip eating before sailing. An empty stomach can be almost as bad as one with the wrong types of food in it. Give your stomach acids something to work on other than your well-being. Give your stomach time to

begin digesting your meal. Get up a little earlier if you must to eat relaxedly and an hour or more before going out on the water. Don't overeat and get bloated either. Easy does it.

4. Drink plenty of water. Even partial dehydration lowers your body's resistance to the stressful factors caused by the boat ride. Take lots of water with you and drink often.

5. Do not drink alcoholic beverages for several hours. Alcohol tends to dehydrate the body. Its other symptoms are not desirable either. Alcohol can prevent the REM (Rapid Eye Movement) stage of sleep, the one in which you dream and your brain rests. You may feel tired and unalert from just a few drinks, two qualities not conducive to safe boating. If you do plan on drinking, make every third drink a glass of water. It will reduce dehydration and your chances for a hangover.

6. Avoid gasoline or diesel fumes. They can put you over the edge literally and figuratively. Stay out of direct sunlight as much as possible. Avoid becoming overheated and dehydrated.

7. Again, if possible, avoid the cabin and other enclosed spaces. Sometimes, a breezy spot in the sun may be preferable to a shady spot in a stuffy cabin. The open air and ability to look out over the horizon are often more important than being in a shady spot, which can be stuffy and enclosed, limiting your view of the horizon and perhaps making you more prone to motion sickness.

There will be less motion towards the center of the boat, both horizontally and vertically, and it will increase with the height of the waves. Avoid the upper decks as the higher you go, the more you will experience swaying back and forth. Horizontally, you want to be amidships, towards the center, rather than at the bow or stern. The more sensitive to motion sickness you are, the closer you need to be towards the center, which is the calmest part of the boat.

8. If you are beginning to feel a bit queasy, stand up and look out over the horizon. Despite what you might think, sitting or laying down is the worst thing you can do at this point. Don't do it. This is a critical moment. You will get much worse even faster and may reach a point of no return if you make the wrong choice. Soda crackers seem to help some people by calming their stomachs and reducing nausea. Steering the boat is an instant remedy.

9. When the boat is rolling with the waves rather than moving under its own power and you are standing on deck, possibly getting hot, your resistance to motion sickness diminishes rapidly. Reduce that exposure time to an absolute minimum.

11. Have some water and fruit before. It can help by rehydrating you.

12. If someone in your party is overcome by sea sickness, get away from them at once! Unfortunately, many of us can do fine until someone else loses it. Then we have a sympathetic reaction and succumb as well. It could be the sound, the smell, the sight, or a combination of them that triggers the same response in us. You don't have to be close to your buddy at this time. There is nothing you can do to help.

If you feel nauseous and about to succumb, please avoid the entry and exit areas of the boat. Hang your head over the gunwales.

Medications and Natural Preventatives

Ginger is a natural preventative. It soothes a queasy stomach and has no side effects. You can get it in pill form, tablets or powder, as ginger root in many herb and health food stores, or as pickled ginger slices at Japanese food marts and even at many Japanese restaurants. Most serve it pickled with sushi, hand rolls, and other of their dishes. It puts out the fire that too much wasabe can start.

Some doctors recommend that you can take it 12-24 hours before, as preventing sea sickness is easier than curing it. Somewhere from 1 gram up to 4 grams per day of powdered ginger is recommended. Some studies seem to indicate that ginger is more effective in the reduction of vomiting and sweating than nausea and vertigo, although they reduce those symptoms as well. You can try gingersnap cookies and ginger ale, although their lower ginger content may not be as effective. They do work for many sailors though.

Eating peppermint in conjunction with ginger is reported by as being even more effective. Since mint does have some of the same calming qualities as ginger, this may be true. Perhaps it is just the belief that it works that is effective. Regardless, it is an inexpensive and pleasant addition. An added benefit is making your breath sweeter.

Another treatment is an acupressure wrist band. It applies pressure to a particular point on your wrist which can prevent the feeling of nausea.

Here's an interesting treatment that was found. It is a treatment that works on some after they are feeling queasy, rather than as a preventative. Immerse your feet in ice water. Anecdotal reports indicate it helps some people.

There are other preventatives, such as over the counter and prescription medications. Most should be taken in advance and not on an empty stomach. Be sure to read the instructions. Dramamine is one that has been used for years. Meclizine and bonine are also effective. You can find them at most pharmacies and drug stores. Scopolamine was used for awhile in the Transderm patches, but was taken off the market because of quality control problems, though it is now available again (as of fourth quarter 1997). Be sure to read this warning about sea sickness medications. It might give you more reasons to try other methods of prevention than medication.

Scopolamine is a prescription drug in the family of chemicals known as belladonna alkaloids (belladonna from the Italian for beautiful lady. Renaissance women took belladonna to get dilated pupils, an effect of scopolamine). Scopolamine should not be used by people with glaucoma. Its side effects can include dry mouth (the most common side effect,) dilated pupils with blurred vision, drowsiness, disorientation, confusion, memory disturbances, dizziness, restlessness, hallucinations, and difficulty urinating. When you stop using the patches you can also get disorientation, confusion, memory disturbances, dizziness, and restlessness.

Scopolamine's side effects are not predictable. You could have used it without problems many times before and still develop an untoward reaction. Some of the side effects are similar to the effects of nitrogen narcosis, and even if you're having a mild reaction to the scopolamine (and maybe not even know it) the reaction could be more pronounced at depth.

There is no one I know of who can't get seasick if the conditions are right, but there are some things that can be done to reduce the possibility.

More Tips!

1. Don't drink liquor excessively the night before departing. The slight morning-after feeling can be many times compounded on a boat.
2. Be careful to avoid greasy foods. The first sign of seasickness is indigestion and it often never gets past that point.
3. Drink Coke or Pepsi. These two drinks help reduce the chances of getting sick because they contain phosphoric acid, which is an ingredient in Emetrol, a drug to control vomiting. That's the medical explanation I received from a doctor when I asked why a Coke seems to settle the stomach. Eat Saltine crackers. They absorb the excess acidity very well. If the indigestion is really bad, take an antacid.
4. Stay up on deck where the air is fresh and you can see the horizon. The worst thing is to focus on a near object that is moving around in relation to the background like making an intricate repair below decks in the forepeak of the boat. When you stay on deck you can see the horizon and it greatly helps maintain your equilibrium and orientation. Also, since the smell of diesel fuel can aggravate seasickness, fresh air helps.
5. If you have a choice of berths, don't choose one in the forward cabin. There is less pitching motion in the center of the boat and the quietest berth from the point of view of movement is often the quarter-berth, if there is one.
6. Sleep on your back. This seems to support the stomach better from bouncing around, though, not being a doctor, I couldn't tell you why.
7. Keep busy on deck. Some say seasickness is completely psychological. I know of people who have gone asleep feeling well, only to wake up seasick, so I doubt that it's all psychological. However, if you sit around worrying that you might get seasick, it's apt to happen. Seeing and smelling others seasick doesn't seem to have an effect on me, but it may cause others to feel sick. If you're very busy on deck steering, or trimming and

changing sails, you are less apt to feel bad, but once you do feel sick, activity tends to make it worse. You'll feel much better if you tickle your throat over the side and get rid of it. Obviously, this has to be done on the leeward side of the boat and it's best to have someone hold onto your belt in back, because you don't have much control while vomiting.

8. Have your ears cleaned before a long race or cruise. This has helped many people reduce their proneness to seasickness by allowing the balance mechanism in the ears to work better. I've never had it done myself, but I've heard it helps.

9. Be in good physical condition. It reduces your chances of becoming seasick and also reduces its debilitating effects on you if you do.

10. Steer. This even helps the crewmembers that have already started to feel queasy. Steering necessitates looking at the horizon (#4) and keeping busy (#7), and provides anticipation of what the next movement of the boat will be.

When you encounter very rough weather early in a distance race or long cruise, particularly early in the season or before you have had a chance to get much sailing in, your chances are higher you'll get sick. If you have a couple of days to get your "sea legs"(this term applies to maintaining your balance and insofar as balance affects your tendency towards seasickness, it has come to apply to that also), you should have no trouble.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SEASICKNESS (May, 2002)

By Anne Campbell

Mal de Mer -- seasickness -- does exist and is one of the primary reason many people avoid cruises. But the fear is often groundless when you cruise in the tranquil waters of the Caribbean, Bahamas and Alaska as well as the rivers and canals of the U.S. and Europe. Moreover, there are over-the-counter remedies which work for most people, and procedures you can follow if you do feel queasy. And, if you do happen to hit a storm one of the world's oceans, ships' doctors can administer injections that eliminate all discomfort.

You are least likely to suffer from motion sickness in the Caribbean. The islands act as a barrier, and seas are tranquil unless a storm should hit, which is fairly uncommon. Rivers and canals offer smooth sailing, and you'll find calm sailing in Alaska after reaching the inside passage. Sufferers should avoid the world's oceans and very small ships. The roughest waters are found in the North Atlantic and the southern tip of South America.

But anytime you plan on sailing in the ocean it's wise to be prepared with one of the remedies listed below. I hadn't been seasick for 10 years until sailed from New York to Bermuda -- and this is after feeling fine in the much higher 38 ft. seas enroute to Antarctica!

THE "PATCH":

The Transderm Scop, a prescription transdermal skin patch, is back on the market as of January, 1998. The dime-sized adhesive patch is worn behind the ear, delivering medication over a three-day period. While the drug manufacturer claims that 80% of users won't experience drowsiness, there are side effects which make it difficult for some cruisers to wear. Consult your physician about using the patch and a prescription.

OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATION:

Most people have excellent results from Dramamine and Bonine, but these should be taken a day before departure to eliminate discomfort. Personally I prefer Bonine, as it causes less drowsiness and you can drink while taking it. But remember to take it BEFORE you set sail. If you're already ill, it won't work fast enough. As in the case of any medication, check with your doctor to determine if they are suitable for you.

SEA BANDS:

Non-medicated wrist bands which relieve motion sickness by acting on acupuncture points. Tested by the Australian Yacht Club, I'm met people the world over who swear by them. An excellent choice for pregnant women.

ACTIONS TO TAKE:

Here's a sure-fire remedy for queasiness: eat lots of crackers and apples (to absorb the acid in the stomach) and avoid all fluids. Do not lie down. Go outside on deck and stare at the horizon; avoid enclosed areas such as elevators.

SHIP'S DOCTORS:

Even ships' crew can become ill if a bad storm hits at sea. Ships have physicians aboard who can administer medication by injection which will eliminate all effects.

CALM YOUR FEARS:

Cruise company executives have reported passengers beginning to feel ill on the pier before they even board the vessel!!! Fear doesn't cause sea sickness, but why hamper the fun of the first few days of the voyage until you discover your fears are completely ungrounded?? visit to ecological park Xcaret.

Tips to avoid sea sickness

Sea sickness is brought on by the inner ears inability to cope with motion in more than one axis. If you have ever been sea sick you know it is not something you want to experience again as it just ruins your day. If you follow the following tips even the flightiest of stomachs should be OK. If you are worried about this aspect of your trip make sure you tell the captain as he can usually stay in, or get to, calmer waters! Remember that your captain and crew are there to make your day as enjoyable as possible but will have a hard time if you don't communicate your concerns!

1. Try not to eat a heavy breakfast loaded with fat.
2. Partying to excess the night before you go out. A bad hangover will definitely ruin your day.

Here's a list of remedies that you can take to alleviate any worries:

Scopolamine:

This is a prescription patch! If you want to be absolutely certain not to get sick this is for you! I have never encountered sea sickness when a client wears the "patch". The patch is normally worn behind the ear and is the most effective remedy.

Dramamine:

This is an over the counter remedy and is effective but has a very nasty side effect. "You will get very sleepy". Most of our clients who use this pill sleep most of the day. I would advise you to only take this medication if no other is available.

Bonine:

The remedy of choice in over the counter remedies. It is as effective as Dramamine without the sleepy side effect. If you elect to take this remedy please follow the directions but take one pill the night before and one pill the morning of your trip. Used this way it is very effective.

Sea Band:

Sea Band wrist elastics are a pressure point type of therapy. My experience has been 50 / 50. If you want to try the wrist bands by all means give it a go.
