Patient education: Motion sickness (The Basics)
Written by the doctors and editors at UpToDate

What is motion sickness? — Motion sickness is a condition that causes nausea, dizziness, and other problems. It happens to people when they are on a boat, in a car, on a carnival ride, or in some other situation in which something is moving them.

What are the symptoms of motion sickness? — The symptoms include:

- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Belching
- Making more saliva than usual
- Warmth
- Sweating

Is there anything I can do on my own to feel better? — Yes. You might feel better if you keep your eyes on the outside world while you are in motion. For example, if you are in a car, sit in the front and look in the direction you are moving; if you are on a boat, stay on the deck and look to the horizon. This helps make what you see match the movement you are feeling, and so you are less likely to feel sick.

You should also avoid reading, watching a movie, or looking at things close to you inside the vehicle you are riding.

Sometimes, lying on your back can ease motion sickness.

Should I see a doctor or nurse? — If you know you get motion sickness and you need to be on a boat or in a car, see your doctor or nurse. He or she can help you figure out how to manage your problem.

How is motion sickness treated? — There are a number of medicines that can help prevent and treat motion sickness. In general, these medicines work best if you take them before symptoms start. Many have the drawback of making you feel sleepy.

Non-prescription (over-the-counter) medicines include:

- Dimenhydrinate (sample brand names: Dramamine, TripTone)
- Diphenhydramine (sample brand name: Benadryl)
- Meclizine (sample brand names: Antivert, Bonine)

The most commonly used prescription medicines include:

- Scopolamine patch (brand names: Scopace, Transderm Scop) – This is a patch that can stay on your skin for 3 days.
- Promethazine (sample brand names: Phenadoz, Promethegan)
Other treatments for motion sickness include ginger, physical therapy, and acupressure.

**Can motion sickness be prevented?** — Yes. The same medicines used to treat motion sickness can also prevent it. You can buy some of these medicines without a prescription.

**What if I am pregnant?** — Women who are pregnant are much more likely than other people to get motion sickness. Luckily, there are medicines that pregnant women can safely take to prevent and treat the condition. Ask your doctor which medicines are safe for you and your baby.

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