

Travel sickness

Travel sickness is a form of **kinetosis**, literally translated as “motion sickness”. This can occur at sea, in a car, an aeroplane or train and can cause unpleasant symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, dizziness, vertigo, sweating, and in rare cases may lead to circulatory collapse.

This is caused because the brain is being sent various messages. The eyes and sense of balance report: there is movement around me. However, the feet report: the ground beneath me is still. Sooner or later the brain gives up and reports back: I don't feel well!

Prevention

To stop this from happening, there is first some advice to prevent travel sickness:

1. Don't eat or drink too much before travelling. Having a stomach that is too full and eating high-fat and strongly smelling foods causes nausea.
2. Consuming coffee and alcohol and smoking may make nausea worse.
3. Whilst travelling, sit facing the direction of travel if possible, sit in the front seats in a car or bus, keep your head still and watch the horizon or rest with your eyes closed, don't read or watch videos. Make sure there is a supply of fresh air.
4. Avoid sleep deprivation as tiredness can make travel sickness worse.

Physical measures

Unfortunately, there are not yet any travel sickness medicines that are totally compatible with diving. All remedies have adverse effects on the central nervous system such as drowsiness, delayed reactions, visual disturbances, lack of coordination or dizziness.

We will start with simple measures.

According to the principles of acupuncture, there are two points on the body which can be stimulated to reduce dizziness and nausea. Even pressing on these Nei Guan or He Gu points helps. “Sea Bands” are a more simple alternative. These are elastic armbands fitted with a raised plastic button that stimulate the Nei Guan point.

Medicinal measures

Ginger, whether fresh or part of a preparation, is a versatile natural remedy which calms the stomach and can help with travel sickness.

Vitamin C can reduce the level of histamine in the blood and thus prevent travel sickness - either in the form of food, or as a dose of 2 grams per day, preferably starting the day before travelling.

The effect of many naturopathic remedies has not been adequately proven by studies, but there are relatively few side effects.

Before travelling, people who are prone to travel sickness can ask their doctor or pharmacist to recommend or prescribe medication for them. This should be taken before travelling as it tends to be less effective once symptoms have already started.

The travel sickness medications available in Germany are anticholinergics (scopolamine as patches, tablets or chewing gum) and antihistamines (cinnarizine, dimenhydrinate, diphenhydramine and promethazine, and cinnarizine + dimenhydrinate for acute travel sickness; mostly in tablet form). Drowsiness and dizziness are common side effects of all listed medications. They can also cause significant interactions in the event of pre-existing illnesses and with other medications. Many of these medications cannot be taken when driving vehicles and diving due to their side effects.

Conclusion

Many methods are very effective for travel sickness.

Simple preventative measures and naturopathic means have few side effects and are safe. Medications are very effective, but are associated with significant side effects.

Finally, there is one more consolation: reactions to movement can be trained. Endurance sports and types of sport that stimulate the sense of balance are useful for this. Travelling more frequently can also help.

Sources

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