

AVOIDING SEA SICKNESS

Avoiding Sea Sickness while Boating, 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 vapours. None of these unpleasant experiences are present while sailing with us!

Roll is the side to side movement, much more prevalent on a power boat while fishing, 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.

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 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 adhere to 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

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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. 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 and relax 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 you may feel tired and not alert 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.

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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.

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.

Some doctors recommend that you can take it 12-24 hours before, as preventing sea sickness is easier than curing it.

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 accupressure 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.

More Tips!

1. Don't drink alcohol 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.

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4. Stay up on deck where the air is fresh and you can see the horizon.

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5. If you have a choice of berths, don't choose one in the forward cabin if sailing at night.
6. Sleep on your back. This seems to support the stomach better from bouncing around,
7. Keep busy on deck. If you're very busy on deck steering, or trimming and changing sails, you are less apt to feel bad.
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
9. Be in good physical condition. It reduces your chances of becoming seasick and also reduces its debilitating effects on you if you do. .