

What to Do About Motion Sickness

By Tracy A. Leonard, D.V.M.

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Many people are aware of the nauseating signs of motion sickness and the effect it can have on a trip. This is also true for dogs.



A dog looking out the window may contribute to motion sickness. Photo © [Can Stock Photo](#).

Motion sickness is an illness associated with motion. This can include being in a car, a boat or an airplane. The cause of motion sickness is stimulation of the vestibular apparatus within the inner ear. In some pets (and humans) when this apparatus is stimulated, your dog feels dizzy and vomiting may develop. Usually, the signs of motion sickness stop when the vehicle stops moving. Dogs afflicted with motion sickness begin drooling, feeling nauseated and often develop vomiting (and sometimes diarrhea).

There are various ways to treat motion sickness. It is recommended that the traveling dog not be allowed to look out a window. One theory is that by viewing the poles passing, the dog's motion sickness increases. Using a towel or sheet to cover the crate or placing the crate on the floor could help.

Sometimes the signs of motion sickness can be overcome by conditioning the pet to travel. Slow, short and frequent trips in the vehicle, gradually increasing length of the ride, can help condition your dog.

Some dogs cannot be conditioned and medication is necessary. Three commonly used medications can help to reduce the nausea associated with motion sickness include diphenhydramine (Benadryl), meclizine (Bonine, Antivert) and dimenhydrinate (Dramamine). These medications are available without a prescription, but should never be used unless specifically recommended by a veterinarian. Proper dosage and use are crucial to treating and diminishing the signs of motion sickness.

For some dogs, the motion sickness and anxiety associated with travel are so severe that sedatives are necessary. Two commonly used sedatives include acepromazine and phenobarbital. These are available by prescription from your veterinarian and should be used with caution. In pets traveling by air, extreme caution should be used because of the possibility of side effects. When flying a dog, the cargo hold has little direct supervision of animals, so any side effects can go unnoticed. Also, there is little chance that a dog can receive medical help while the plane is in the air.

Safe travels!

Legal Disclaimer: *If your pet is showing any signs of distress or you suspect your pet is seriously ill, CONTACT YOUR VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY.*

Reprinted with the permission of Tracy A. Leonard, D.V.M., owner of Indian Ripple Veterinary Clinic in Beavercreek, Ohio. She has been showing Basenjis in conformation, obedience and lure coursing since 1985. She and her husband Jeffrey are licensed AKC lure-coursing judges.

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