

Motoring Along -- How to Protect Your Child From Motion Sickness

Say the words “road trip” to most kids, and it means a visit to a theme park, day at the beach or jaunt to the mall. Say the words “road trip” to kids who suffer from motion sickness, and it means dizziness, nausea and vomiting.

Who gets motion sickness and why

About 90 percent of Americans suffer from motion sickness at some time in their life; toddlers and preschoolers are most susceptible.

Motion sickness results from a conflict between the eye and ear: the inner ears detect that the car is moving, but the eyes – which are focused within the car – do not. The brain gets conflicting signals, and nausea results. For example, if you are reading while riding in a car, your sight is detecting little movement because it is concentrating on the printed page, but your balance center can still feel the larger movement of the car.

Any type of transportation can cause motion sickness – riding on an airplane, in a boat, a train, or a car. Even amusement park rides can bring on the uncomfortable symptoms.

How to spot motion sickness

The symptoms of motion sickness usually start with a slight feeling of queasiness, a cold sweat, fatigue and loss of appetite. A young child may not be able to describe the nausea, but will show signs by becoming pale and sweaty, and eventually, vomiting.

Protect your child from motion sickness

The best way to deal with motion sickness is to prevent it. Try the following tips to keep your children motion sickness free on your next “road trip”:

- Have him sit in the middle of the vehicle, and facing forward
- Have her look out the front window in the distance
- Don't let him read or play with hand-held video games
- Feed her a small, nutritious snack, not a big meal, before the trip
- Avoid spicy or greasy foods
- Avoid strong odors such as cigarette smoke and smelly foods
- Open the window for fresh air
- Distract him by listening to a CD, the radio, or by talking
- Ask your pediatrician about motion sickness drugs and the appropriate dosage for children
- Plan your trip with enough stops to allow your child to get out and walk around if she needs to do so

When traveling by plane, request a seat over the front edge of a wing, and direct the air vent toward the child's face. If going on a cruise, request a cabin in the middle of the ship near the water line. When riding on a train, seat your child near a window in a forward-facing seat.

How to respond to motion sickness

If your child starts to feel motion sickness:

- If possible, stop the activity immediately. Pull the car over and allow the child to get out and walk around.
- Place a cool damp cloth on the forehead.
- Feed her some dry crackers and a carbonated beverage.

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