The Truth About Seasickness and How to Avoid it. by Gary Clail

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Seasickness or Mal de Mer as the French call it is the debilitating effect motion sickness may have on your body. It is a temporary illness brought about only by the motion of a ship or boat rocking. It actually affects more people than you would expect. Even people that have never experienced it before can sometimes get a bout of the undesired malaise. Research has reported that on a test run on seventy nine US Space Shuttle missions 94 per cent of astronauts used some form of medication during the flight to settle their stomachs.

The unusual (and irritating) thing about seasickness is that it does not affect people in the same way. Often even when many people are on a boat only a small portion of them will feel ill. This may be down to strength of stomach or how rocky the boat is.

Many new-to-boats passengers, who have not yet gained their sea legs, will be anxious about the possible effect of seasickness on them and if it will be particularly disruptive. Other passengers who have experienced the graphic effects many a time before will want to know how to avoid the worse times they have experienced on the ocean previously.

So what exactly happens to the body during seasickness? The problem lies in the body, inner ear, and eyes all sending different signals to the brain, resulting in confusion and queasiness. Your sensory perception gets out of synch. The stress that this generates is due to the expectation of land beneath your feet. Visual stimuli are to blame also. Observing cabin doors and other furniture on board can confuse the brain as it understands these items to be static. Suddenly our point of reference is skewed leading to nausea.

The good news for sufferers is that the condition often disappears without medical treatment. Within a few days at most your brain learns to compensate for the swaying and pitching of the boat. However once back on land, ironically, it might take a little while to regulate once again!

The short term discomfort can however be avoided by some small changes. You can often avoid seasickness by staying busy and keeping your mind occupied. Keeping above deck in fresh air and focusing your mind on anything other than the swaying environment will help. Take deep breaths and drink plenty of water. Let you brain adjust to this unstable environment by allowing the horizon to act as a true point of reference. Find a space on the boat where the motion is at its minimum and allow yourself to gaze at it.

If you can, try and eat lightly and avoid fatty or spicy foods. Try to stay warm, relaxed and comfortable. Try to sleep at the appropriate time and allow your brain to recover. Once you have learned to control this inconvenience you are free to travel all over the world with no fear.

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