Taming *Mal de Mer*

Strategies for Beating Seasickness

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Seasickness:

- Is debilitating – seasick people are really sick
- Isn’t just psychological, or “all in the head”
- Can strike almost anyone

- Is somewhat, but not altogether, predictable
Seasickness also is:

- Treatable
- Preventable
- The subject of extensive research

Operators and passengers need good information
Purpose of this study:

To help mariners and passengers minimize the effects of seasickness

By reviewing the current state of knowledge and research

And correlating published information with informal observations aboard my own charter boat operating in Bristol Bay
Sources of Information
Reviewed 162 published sources, including:

- Scientific papers and abstracts
- Articles by physicians and specialists
- Literature published by drug makers
- Marine, yachting, popular journals
- Web postings
  plus...
- Personal interviews
Causes of Seasickness
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- Repeated rhythmic motion
- Vestibular and proprioceptor systems detect motion out of harmony with normal viscera patterns
- Brain interprets this disharmony as evidence that something is wrong (like poisoning). Instructs stomach to purge.
One misconception...

Some sources say it is caused by dissonance between vestibular (inner ear) and visual systems.

If this were so, it could be prevented simply by keeping an eye on the horizon.
Two components:

1. The distress experienced by the brain via the vestibular and proprioceptor systems

2. The stomach’s reaction to it

Antacids and folk remedies that soothe the stomach don’t attack the real cause.
How to Predict It

- Anyone who suffers from other forms of motion sickness is susceptible

- Anyone who has never had motion sickness also is susceptible

A good self test: Read while riding as a passenger in a car on a winding road or in stop-and-go traffic
Behaviors to Prevent It

- The night before:
  - Eat and drink moderately
  - Take a first dose of medicine
Behaviors to Prevent It

- The morning of departure

  Avoid rich or fatty foods

  Avoid or drink only minimal coffee

  Take a second dose of medicine
Behaviors to Prevent It

- On the boat:
  Position self for a good view outside
  Stay low and near the center of boat
  Avoid head, galley, fuel, exhaust smells
  Avoid reading or close focus tasks
  Move around, get fresh air
  Avoid alcohol, caffeine, tobacco
  Remain standing, “ride the waves”
If Seasickness Starts:
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- Protect pukers from injury or falling overboard
Alternative, folk or “natural” remedies
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- honey
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- biofeedback
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- “artificial horizon” glasses
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- “artificial horizon” glasses
- rubbing alcohol
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- herbal drinks and salves
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- “artificial horizon” glasses
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- a half-cup of seawater
Alternative, folk or “natural” remedies

- honey
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- “artificial horizon” glasses
- rubbing alcohol
- herbal drinks and salves
- a half-cup of seawater
- holding a can of beer behind the ear
What helps some people:

- Ginger root, candy, powder, or drink (the stomach)
- Acupressure on the precordial #6 (nei kuan) position of the wrist
- Electronic stimulation of the nei kuan (the product called Relief Band)
Drugs

- Pills, capsules, chewable tablets, suppositories, syrups, injections, gels, and "the patch"

- Effectiveness highly variable

- All have some side effects
Over the Counter (OTC) Drugs

- Most are antihistamines
- Normally need to begin treatment at least two hours before exposure
- Minimal side effects, including drowsiness and dry mouth
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- Dimenhydrinate (original Dramamine, TripTone, Gravol)
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- Cyclizine (Marezine)
- Meclizine (Bonine, Antivert, Dramamine Less Drowsy)
Prescription Drugs

- More powerful
- Can be administered more ways
- Have more, and more powerful, side effects
Prescription Drugs

- Promethazine (Phenergan) – proved to be best anti-space-sickness drug by NASA
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- Cinnazarine (Stugeron, Antimet) – popular in Europe, Caribbean, not avail in U.S.
- Scopolamine (Transderm-Scop) – convenient and very popular but has side effects for some people. Also gel, tablet
Prescription Drugs

“Navy Cocktail” – Phenergan and ephedrine
Prescription Drugs

- “Navy Cocktail” – Phenergan and ephedrine
- “Coast Guard Cocktail” – Phenergan and Sudafed
Using OTC Drugs Effectively

- Get an adequate amount into the blood stream

(Try the “chew but don’t swallow” method)

- Believe in it. Placebo effect alleviates symptoms in 40% of cases
Seasickness Can be Beaten

- Anticipate, and plan ahead
- Compare the convenience, side effects, and reports from friends of different drugs
- Pick one and “test drive” it before going to sea
- Use it correctly
- (Try the “chew but don’t swallow” with a chewable OTC if no advance preparation)
For more information...

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