

Motion Sickness in Dogs

- Motion sickness can cause your dog to develop a fear of riding in a vehicle.
- If your dog seems to have motion sickness, take him or her to your veterinarian.
- Do not give your dog any medication without first consulting your veterinarian.

The Basics

Just like people, dogs can have motion sickness, which can make even short car rides stressful for dogs and their owners. Fortunately, there are ways to ease or eliminate your dog's motion sickness, including conditioning your dog to car rides and using medications recommended by your veterinarian.

Motion sickness is more common in puppies and young dogs than in older dogs because the ear structures used for balance aren't fully developed in puppies. Therefore, many dogs outgrow motion sickness. If the first few car rides of your dog's life caused him or her to become nauseated, your dog may equate travel with vomiting, even after his or her ears fully mature. Stress can also add to motion sickness; if your dog only rides in cars to go to veterinary visits, he or she may become sick with worry on the way there. If your dog appears to be ill after several car rides, consult your veterinarian about treatment for motion sickness.

Diagnosis

Signs of motion sickness in dogs include the following:

- Inactivity
- Listlessness
- Uneasiness
- Yawning or panting
- Whining
- Excessive drooling
- Vomiting (even on an empty stomach)
- Fear of cars

If your dog develops a fear of cars, your veterinarian can determine whether the cause is motion sickness or

something else, such as an orthopedic problem. If your dog is sore, he or she might be reluctant to get in and out of a car, which might appear to be fearfulness.

Prevention and Treatment

To help you prevent or treat motion sickness in your dog, your veterinarian may recommend one or more of the following:

- Help your dog face forward while traveling by strapping him or her into the seat with a specially designed canine seatbelt. If you buckle your dog into the front passenger seat, position the seat as far as possible from the dashboard or disable the passenger air bag because it could be hazardous to your dog.
- Lower your car windows a few inches to equalize the inside and outside air pressures.

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- Keep your vehicle cool.
- Limit your dog's food and water consumption before travel.
- Give your dog a treat or two every time he or she gets into the car.
- Give your dog a toy that he or she enjoys and can only have in the car.
- Give your dog a 1- to 2-week break from car rides.
- Use a different vehicle to avoid triggering your dog's negative response to your usual vehicle.
- Take short car rides to places your dog enjoys, such as the park, especially if your dog associates car rides only with trips to the veterinarian's office.

Common Conditions

- Gradually build your dog's tolerance to car rides. Each of the following steps should take a few days to a week: (1) accustom your dog to approaching the car without getting in it, (2) spend time with your dog in the car with the engine off, (3) take short trips (e.g., around the block), (4) take longer trips. Reward your dog with praise and/or treats every time he or she does something well.

If your dog doesn't outgrow motion sickness or respond to conditioning techniques, consult your veterinarian about using a medication to help your dog.

What Not to Do

- Do not try to accustom your dog to car rides by subjecting him or her to repeated, long rides. This will only upset your dog and possibly worsen his or her fear or motion sickness.
- Do not yell at your dog if he or she vomits or whines during car rides. Verbal or physical punishment won't make your dog a better passenger and could heighten his or her fear of car rides.
- Do not give your dog any kind of medication without first consulting your veterinarian.