

# CAR & MOTION SICKNESS:



Just as with some people, we occasionally encounter pets that do not cope well with motion, especially evident during car rides. We see this problem more in puppies since their equilibrium & balance have not been fully developed. Fortunately, most dogs outgrow the problem of motion sickness. Some pets just get overly excited and anxious during a car ride, and I will provide some suggestions for that. But for those dogs where excess drooling, intestinal upset and vomiting are an issue, here are several tips to make for a more pleasant journey for everyone.

For a **QUICK FIX**, try **Dramamine** (Dimenhydrinate) or **Bonine** (Meclizine). **They must be given ~45 minutes to 1 hour before traveling to give them a chance to get into their system.**

Here are guidelines to follow (understand that these are human medications, not pet medications, so these are just guidelines as no clinical dose has been established for animals). There can be individual variation from pet to pet what is the best dose:

**Dramamine for Kids** = 12.5 mg per tablet.

- Dogs 5-15 pounds - 1 tablet every 8 to 12 hours as needed

**Dramamine** = 25 mg per tablet

- Dogs 15-30 lbs - 1 tablet every 8 to 12 hours as needed
- Dogs 30-50 lbs - 2 tablets every 8 to 12 hours as needed
- Dogs 50-75 lbs - 3 tablets every 8 to 12 hours as needed
- Dogs 75-100 lbs - 4 tablets every 8 to 12 hours as needed

**Bonine / Antivert** = 25 mg per tablet

- Dogs 0 - 50 lbs - 1 tablet once a day
- Dogs >50 lbs - 2 tablets once a day

Other important tips:

- **I recommend first trying the medication on a day when they will not be traveling.** That way you can see how your pet responds to the medication. Observe to make sure that they are not too groggy or agitated by the medication.
- **Do not feed your dog for several hours prior to travel.** Less food on their stomach means less cleanup if they do vomit.
- **Provide just a handful of ice cubes in the water bowl** for the last couple of hours before traveling. As a result, your dog can't over-drink, so they're less likely to vomit. The ice cubes will melt just enough to provide water if needed.
- Have a familiar pet bed or blanket or towel for them to lay on ~ this often reduces their anxiety as well as making it easier to clean up if they do vomit.
- If you are taking a long car ride, consider getting **Cerenia** tablets from a full-service veterinarian (give 2 hrs prior to the ride). Cerenia is a prescription medication, but does an excellent job of controlling vomiting as well as providing some reduction in anxiety

I am asked about using homeopathic / naturopathic supplements. I have never had any pet owners tell me that their pet benefited from these medications. While I won't discourage someone from trying a homeopathic product, I think it's important to have realistic expectations if you try one. Let me know if you have success.

**LONG-TERM Solution:** While it's always preferred to prevent a problem rather than fix a problem, it can be a time-consuming process. But for the pet owner who has the time and willingness to change the behavior of their dog, here's a plan to help prevent car sickness. It first involves getting your dog accustomed to your vehicle. I encourage pet owners to simply sit in their car with their dog without even starting the vehicle. Do this once a day for ~5 minutes or so for a few days, offering your pet some tasty treats so they can make a positive association with being in a vehicle. Then continue the same positive reinforcement, but start the car. After a few days of this, then actually drive the car, but only a very short distance. Keep building and building the drive time as your pet gets acclimated to the motion. Understand, this could take a few weeks ... not over a weekend. So be patient.

**The Anxious Pet:** Many dogs and cats become very anxious from car rides, exhibited by excess activity or whining or trembling in dogs ... and excessive 'meowing' or activity in cats. Thunder shirts or a Calmz Vest may work with some dogs. Lavender or Chamomile essential oils may help as well. L-Theanine and Ashwagandha have shown very good results when used for a few days to weeks. While there is currently little documentation of how much to dose, CBD Oil or CBD Dog Chews may be worth a try. Adaptil Spray (dogs) or Feliway spray (cats) can be sprayed in the vehicle as well as on a bandana (then placed around the pet's neck) or sprayed onto a pet's blanket to help provide some calming relief.

Travelling with your pet doesn't need to turn into a disaster. Try these tips, and create a better experience for all.