



Motion Sickness

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Welcome to the Island Drug Podcast. With summer weather finally here, lots of us are starting to get out on the water, so we thought we'd devote this week's podcast to discussing motion sickness. As you probably know, symptoms of motion sickness include cold sweats, dizziness, fatigue, nausea and sometimes vomiting. Motion sickness is due to a disagreement between the visual perception of movement and the vestibular system's sense of motion. The vestibular system is the center of the body that helps us maintain balance by monitoring motion; it is located near the ear. It's not clear why this disagreement causes nausea. One theory is that the body is trying to eliminate a toxin. By this line of reasoning, when the brain senses a disagreement it assumes that either the eyes or the vestibular system is hallucinating and that the hallucination may be due to a toxin. Consequently the brain induces vomiting in an effort to eliminate that toxin.

When traveling, motion may be sensed by the vestibular system but not perceived by the eye. Imagine reading a book inside a boat that is in rough water. You sense the boat is moving but you don't see it because you're focused on the book. One thing you can do if feeling sick when traveling is to attempt to see the motion that you're being subjected to by looking outside. In a boat focusing at the horizon can help as it allows you to see how the boat is rocking. The other thing that might help is limiting the motion: in a car sit up front, in a plane sit by the wings, on a boat move toward the middle of the vessel. Fresh air, chewing gum, and sleep may help as well.

Fortunately there are also medications that can be quite helpful in combating motion sickness. Over-the-counter product like dimenhydrinate (Dramamine), meclizine (Bonine, Antivert) and cyclizine (Marezine) are effective for motion sickness. In addition to other effects they decrease the activity of the vestibular system. Common side effects include drowsiness, dry mouth, and urinary retention. Among these products, meclizine is generally considered to have less severe side effects. Another over-the-counter product that may be helpful is ginger. Many people find it effective and it doesn't cause drowsiness. Transderm (scopolamine) patches work very well for preventing motion sickness. The patch is applied behind an ear. It slowly delivers a consistent amount of the medication over 72 hours. Common side effects are drowsiness and dry mouth. In the US it is only available by prescription.

All of these products do a better job of preventing rather than treating motion sickness. So planning is important. If you're prone to getting seasick, start taking the medication at least a few hours before the trip begins and take it for the duration of the trip even if you're feeling all right.

If you have questions on any of these products please stop by the store and talk to one of our pharmacists. Thanks for tuning in.

References

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