



[Healthy Lifestyle](#)

## Children's health

### **What causes car sickness in children and how can I prevent it?**

Answers from [Jay L. Hoecker, M.D.](#)

Car sickness is a type of motion sickness. Motion sickness occurs when the brain receives conflicting information from the inner ears, eyes and nerves in the extremities.

Imagine a young child sitting low in the back seat without being able to see out the window — or an older child reading a book in the car. The child's inner ear will sense motion, but his or her eyes and joints won't. The result might be an upset stomach, cold sweat, fatigue, and loss of appetite or vomiting.

It's not clear why car sickness affects some children more than others. While the problem doesn't seem to affect most infants and toddlers, children ages 2 to 12 are particularly susceptible.

To prevent car sickness in children, you might:

- **Reduce sensory input.** Encourage your child to look at things outside the car — rather than focusing on books, games or movies. If your child naps, traveling during nap time also might help.
- **Carefully plan pre-trip meals.** Don't give your child spicy or greasy foods or a large meal immediately before or during car travel. If your travel time will be short, skip food entirely. If the trip will be long or your child needs to eat, give him or her a small, bland snack — such as dry crackers and a small drink — before it's time to go.
- **Provide air ventilation.** Adequate air ventilation might help prevent car sickness. Try to keep the air clear of any strong odors, too.
- **Offer distractions.** If your child is prone to car sickness, try distracting him or her during car trips by talking, listening to music or singing songs.
- **Use medication.** If your child is older than 2 and you're planning a long car trip, ask your child's doctor about an over-the-counter medication to prevent car sickness. Dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) is approved for kids 2 and older, and diphenhydramine (Benadryl) can be used for kids 6 and older. Read the product label carefully to determine the correct dose and be prepared for possible side effects, such as drowsiness. Nondrowsy antihistamines don't appear to be effective at treating motion sickness.

If your child starts to develop car sickness, stop the car as soon as possible and let your child get out and walk around — or lie on his or her back for a few minutes with closed eyes. Placing a cool cloth on your child's forehead also might help.

If these tips don't seem to help or your child's car sickness makes travel difficult or impossible, ask your child's doctor about other options.

With

[Jay L. Hoecker, M.D.](#)

## References

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