

Car-Sick Pups

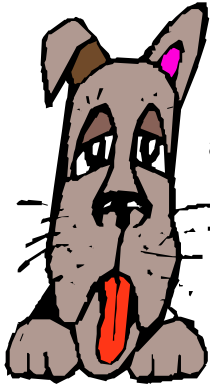
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Younger dogs are most at risk and fortunately many simply outgrow the tendency to be carsick. One of the simplest remedies is to provide light exercise about 30 minutes before a drive.

Remedies to settle a dog's stomach can range from Maalox or Pepto Bismol to natural remedies such as a capsule of ginger or ground ginger from the spice section of the supermarket 30-45 minutes before a trip. Gingersnap cookies may work well, too, and do not taste as hot as the ground ginger. Offer one cookie per 20 pounds of the dog's body weight. Many of the products mentioned here are available at local drug stores and health food stores.



Naturally we advise that use of motion sickness medication, antihistamines or other products should be discussed with your veterinarian.

It is helpful in some cases to attach antistatic strips to a car's bumper.

This will ground the car and reduce static electricity.

Products such as Distress Remedy, Calming Essence or Be Calm can be given orally before a planned trip. Evening primrose, peppermint, chamomile or basil may also have a calming effect when a little is put on a pillow, on cloth strips or cotton balls placed on the dashboard, in the back of the car or in dispensers designed for this purpose, of course making sure the dog cannot reach and swallow the objects. Many may also be used to keep recuperating dogs calm.

Cocculus, nux vomica, kalium phosphate or tabacum also help some dogs, as do Bach Flower essences including Aspen, Mimulus or Dill, or herbs and mixes such as horehound and Pingandan, in pill or tea form.

Other health treatment options might include whole-body massage, traditional acupuncture and newer versions of needle-less acupuncture.

Ask the staff at your local health food stores for recommendations and dosages. As always, check with your veterinarian. There are bound to be dogs allergic to anything suggested, especially those with other skin or food sensitivities.

Check the ventilation in the dog's part of the car or van, and consider that heavy perfume or cologne, or other strong scents such as air fresheners that the driver might like can aggravate the problem.

We believe that many of our dogs down here in Florida are not fond of car rides because we owners tend to rush the dogs into hot cars that have been sitting closed up in the sun. Cooling off the car for a pup's early exposure can circumvent this problem for years to come.

In the long run, desensitizing the dog to car travel is beneficial since in many cases the problem is based on being afraid of the car. Do not feed your pet for a meal or two, then offer him dry food and yummy treats next to the car (engine off). Next open all the doors and windows of your vehicle and give him a meal in the wide-open car, sitting in the shade and still with the engine off.

When he is comfortable in your quiet automobile or van, try feeding him now in the vehicle with the motor on briefly while everything is still wide open, of course in an open area where ventilation is adequate. Close the doors and windows and turn on the air conditioning for the next step, continuing to reward this and each progression.

For the dog that is now comfortable eating his meal (or really yummy treats if still necessary) in the closed vehicle, move the car back and forth in the driveway a few times. Then drive the dog around the block, then on a slightly longer trip each time.

For any training step that is too much for him, where he stops eating because the whole thing is too scary, just back up and do the previous step a while longer before progressing on to the other steps listed. It is best to progress slowly enough that he is confident at every step.

Carbohydrate-heavy and calorie-light snacks seem to help some pups cope, and giving a high-quality balanced diet may also give some measure of relief.

A safe and secure ride includes restraint for your pet and may help motion sickness. A hard plastic or wire travel crate securely anchored in your vehicle is the best choice. Try covering the crate at first then gradually leave a view only out the front or only out the back before adding a side view. A doggie harness and seat belt combination is the next best choice. These all ensure that your pet cannot interfere with your driving and is restrained when a door or window is opened. Many a dog has been killed after a minor auto accident because he got out and was running along the road, disoriented and frightened.