

# SEASICKNESS

## Its Dangers and Possible Remedies



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Most fishermen know about seasickness, either from feeling it themselves or watching others suffer. I'm fortunate that I was always an observer in my years of fishing.

I'll always remember one episode, heading from Cape Spencer into the Gulf of Alaska with a big swell running. During lunch a crew member was unusually quiet. He was taking a bite when a shipmate said, "You might as well tie string on that chicken so you can get it up faster." He ran from the galley to heave over the side.

The good news is that most people get their sea legs after a short time on the water. The bad news is that few fisheries today give those prone to seasickness enough time aboard to adjust. Though temporary and not deadly, seasickness can lead to potentially dangerous dehydration and make fishermen unable to care for themselves and their vessel.

Seasickness is characterized by nausea, vomiting, dizziness and other debilitating symptoms. It generally results from distress in the brain's motion centre that starts the stomach churning.

Most seasickness results from repeated rhythmic motion, particularly up-and-down motion. But it can be compounded by odours, lack of ventilation and fear or apprehension. Contributing factors include consuming alcohol, acidic drinks like coffee and cola, and spicy or fatty foods. Seeing a shipmate vomit can also trigger nausea. It's important to help protect victims from injury or going overboard while vomiting. Encourage them to drink water or light fluids to avoid dehydration.

I've heard a lot of fishermen's folk remedies, although they're not supported by research — honey, peppermint, Vitamin B6, mango, saltine crackers, artificial horizon glasses, rubbing alcohol, herbal drinks, a half-cup of sea water, immersing your feet in ice water, holding a cold can of beer behind the ear. Many say ginger settles the nausea, in the form of candied root, ginger ale, ginger cookies, tea or capsules.

You can buy various medications and products like bands and patches to prevent or minimize seasickness. It's always a good

idea to consult a doctor before using drug-based remedies. The first step is getting the right amount of medication into the bloodstream.

If you're susceptible to seasickness, here are some other ways to help prevent it.

- The night before leaving — Eat and drink moderately. Start any seasickness medication. Get plenty of sleep.
- The morning you leave port — Avoid rich, fatty or high-protein foods, dairy products and coffee. Continue seasickness medication as directed.
- On your boat — If possible, stay low and near the centre of the boat, with a view of the water and horizon. Move with the boat as it rides the waves to avoid abrupt or rapid head movement. Get fresh air, and avoid smells from the galley and head, burning tobacco, fuel and exhaust. Avoid work requiring a lot of close eye focus.

There is no cure-all or magic bullet, but the literature on seasickness shows one thing. If people firmly believe in a remedy, then it's likely to work for them. As anyone who's been seasick can confirm, that's ultimately what counts.

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### BREAKING NEWS

According to data collected by the Association of Workers' Compensation Board of Canada, 1,097 workplace fatalities were recorded in Canada in 2005, up 45 per cent from 758 in 1993 and 18 percent from 958 in 2004. As Canadians work on average 230 days per year, this means that there were nearly five work-related deaths per working day in this country. The most dangerous industry in which to work is fishing and trapping (52.0 fatalities per 100,000 workers or one out of every 1,900 workers in 2004). Look for a summary of this report in the next issue of *Fisherman Life*.

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