

meta-description: Research shows us that cannabinoids play a key role in the management of nausea and vomiting. Here's what it could mean for people with motion sickness.

Categories: Conditions, health Benefits

CBD for motion sickness

Motion sickness is an incredibly common condition, affecting mainly women and younger children. Although it's not necessarily a big issue in everyday life, it can make your life hard whenever you have to take a car, bus, train or even a plane or a boat. Fortunately, researchers are now finding that CBD, a natural hemp product, could reduce motion sickness. Safe, effective, and causing a lot less drowsiness than conventional medicines, it could be a valuable alternative for those who tend to get nauseous with unusual motion.

What is motion sickness and why do we get it?

Motion sickness is an intense feeling of dizziness and nausea that can happen when your internal signals are thrown out of balance. Although we often call motion sickness “being car-sick”, there's a lot more to the condition than vomiting. Those who suffer from it will experience wooziness, dizziness, excess salivation, cold sweats, and headaches, on top of nausea and vomiting.

Motion sickness is usually triggered by car, bus, plane or train travel—situations in which your body moves in a way that it's not used to. We don't know exactly why some people are more prone to experience that feeling than others, but it does seem to be more prevalent in young children, pregnant women, and women in general.

So what is it about being in a moving vehicle that can make you sick? To understand how motion sickness works, you have to understand a bit more about how our body maintains balance. You have many sensory organs at work in your body, sending constant messages to your brain. They tell it where you are, how fast you are moving, what position your limbs are in, which way gravity is moving your body...

The problem is, all of these sensory organs don't always agree. For example, when you're in a car reading a book, your eyes are telling your brain that your body is stationary. But your inner ears are telling it you are in motion. When the brain gets conflicting messages thrown at it, motion sickness occurs—at least in people who are prone to this condition.

What can you do against motion sickness?

When a child experiences motion sickness, it's normal and almost expected. After all, their sensory organs have to get used to a variety of disorientating experiences. But in adults, motion sickness can be more problematic. For example, it can stop some from driving a car, bus, train or even traveling by plane.

There are a couple of easy tricks that can alleviate motion sickness. For example, try to look

at the horizon line when traveling by car, so that your eyes and inner ear both register the same sense of motion. Closing your eyes completely may also help.

Some natural remedies can also be very effective. For example, chewing on some ginger candy or ginger stem can make you less nauseous. Peppermint is also great, so chewing a mint-flavored gum or sniffing some peppermint essential oil drops can make a big difference.

Finally, there are a few off-the-counter or prescription medicines you can get against motion sickness. Most of these belong to a category called antihistamines—a class of drugs that can relieve allergic reactions. Taken just an hour before traveling in any moving vehicle, they can take a lot of the motion sickness away. However, you have to be very careful with them: they often cause drowsiness and could stop you from driving your car or doing your job correctly.

Another possible method of treatment is with cannabinoids. For hundreds of years, the cannabis plant and its derivatives have been used to treat nausea. Today, scientists are looking at one particular molecule: CBD, for its benefits against motion sickness.

What is CBD?

CBD is a molecule found in the cannabis plant, also known as cannabidiol. When this molecule is activated, through a process known as decarboxylation, it acquires a lot of benefits for the body and mind. For example, CBD can

- Prevent seizures
- Lower inflammation
- Alleviate pain
- Treat Chron's disease and IBD
- Help people with autism
- Help people with depression, anxiety, or PTSD
- Relieve stress and panic attacks

It works by activating a biological system called the endocannabinoid system, which regulates functions like pain management, sleep, appetite and inflammation in our body. When we take CBD, it binds to receptors known as CB1 and CB2, which send signals boosting the action of that system.

We now know that the endocannabinoid system, also called ECS, plays a big role in the management of nausea and vomiting. So molecules like CBD that can boost its working show a lot of potential in relieving symptoms of motion sickness.

Is CBD effective against motion sickness? Here's what the research says.

[Research](#) has shown that ECS plays an important role in regulating nausea and vomiting. In a [2014 study](#), scientists examined the effects of a drug called dexamethasone on motion-sickness. They already knew that the drug worked, but they wanted to find out how,

the mechanisms behind its success. They found that motion sickness suppresses the endocannabinoid system. On the other hand, drugs like dexamethasone made it work better. Their conclusion was that people suffering from motion sickness needed something to stimulate the ECS, which would downplay the symptoms.

And what better way to activate the endocannabinoid system than with phytocannabinoids, plant-derived molecules that can bind to the CB1 receptors that control nausea and vomiting?

A [2011 review](#) of studies on the effects of cannabinoids on nausea and vomiting found that both THC (the psychoactive molecule in cannabis) and CBD showed a lot of potential in relieving various forms of nausea.

So far, we don't have any clinical trials testing out the effectiveness of CBD for humans with motion sickness. But the research that has been conducted on other animals shows us that CBD does have the ability to stop nausea by stimulating the ECS, which can be inhibited by motion sickness.

CBD for pain

Nausea and vomiting are not the only symptoms of motion sickness. Pain, and particularly headaches, is another important one. So the fact that [CBD is also useful in alleviating all sorts of pain](#) makes it useful for treating that facet of the condition.

How to take CBD for motion sickness

Most motion-sickness drugs have to be taken at least an hour before the sickness-inducing activity, whether it be a car ride or a flight. With CBD, things are a little different. Some forms of CBD provide their effects instantly. For example, smoking, vaping CBD or applying a CBD transdermal patch can provide almost immediate relief from nausea.

Other forms of CBD are slower to reach our system. So if you're ingesting CBD capsules or edibles, or placing CBD drops under your tongue, you should also be doing this about 30 minutes to an hour before you're at risk of getting motion-sick.

Because motion-sickness is an occasional condition, you don't have to take CBD daily to get relief. It also means you could use a slightly larger dose. That being said, it's always recommended to start slow when taking CBD for the first time. 5 or 10mg is usually enough to see how well your body reacts to it. If you're not getting any adverse reactions (like increased appetite or diarrhea), you can increase the dose progressively until you find proper relief. Of course, you'll have to consult a health specialist who's knowledgeable about CBD to get a dosage recommendation that's appropriate to your size, age, and condition.

Will CBD also make me drowsy?

CBD is a safe substance that only has a [few side-effects](#). However, tiredness and lethargy do appear to be possible consequences of taking CBD. It's good to note that these are just side-effects. So while some people will experience them, the vast majority of those taking CBD never have to worry about it making them tired.

Compare that to the antihistamines usually prescribed against motion-sickness, and you'll find that CBD will make you a lot less drowsy than them. With antihistamines, drowsiness is not a rare side-effect, it's something to be expected.

Can CBD make you drowsy? It can, but it's very unlikely—and certainly a lot more avoidable than when taking antihistamines.

The Takeaway

Thanks to its effects on a biological system that regulates nausea, CBD could be an effective remedy against motion sickness. So far, we're still lacking studies that really confirm its practical role in dealing with that condition. But with few side-effects and good potential for effectiveness, people who get travel-sick can certainly give it a try and see how it works for them.

Bibliography

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CBD and pain management

[2018 review](#) of research on cannabinoids and pain

Safety profile of CBD

[2017 study](#) on the safety and side effects of CBD