

HOW DO I PREVENT MY PET FROM GETTING CARSICK?

▼

HOW DO I PREVENT MY PET FROM GETTING CARSICK?

SHARE

- Download (opens in new window)
- <?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?> Email (opens in new window)
- Print (opens in same window)

Taking your dog or cat with you on a car trip can be a joy, but pets that suffer from motion sickness can swiftly turn the fun into an uncomfortable experience.

So how do you prevent your pet from getting carsick?

Firstly, let's look at the reason dogs and cats get sick, and then we'll look at some prevention strategies.

WHY DO ANIMALS GET CARSICK?

The main reason dogs and cats seem to get motion sickness is the same reason humans get motion sick. It is the feeling we have when what we see visually is different to what we sense in our inner ear. (The inner ear is the innermost part of our ear - a highly sensitive area responsible for hearing and balance).

And just as carsickness is more likely to happen to children, it is also more likely to happen to younger dogs and cats. This may be because their inner ear structure is yet to fully develop, but it may also be due to a lack of travelling experience. Younger pets are not used to being in a car and experiencing the different signals their eyes and inner ear are sending to their brain.

The other reason dogs and cats experience carsickness may be emotional. If they were carsick as puppies or kittens they may automatically associate the car with being sick - bringing on more carsickness - or if they only associate car trips with vet visits, it may bring on anxiety in your pet. Anxiety that can manifest as carsickness.



HOW TO PREVENT CARSICKNESS IN YOUR PET

Thankfully, there are many strategies to help prevent your pet from getting carsick and making your trips - long and short - much more pleasurable for both of you.

1. Start early

First and foremost, the best thing you can do for your pet is to give them plenty of experience with car trips when they're young, even as soon as you adopt them. With some positive reinforcement they will learn that car trips mean plenty of fun adventures ahead.

Start with short trips to enjoyable destinations, like parks or to visit friends, and always encourage and reinforce the positive experience with affection, games, their favourite toy and even a treat.

Be patient as your pet learns this new skill. There is much for them to get used to new environments, new smells, new noises, new vibrations. But with time and patience your pet will start to associate the car with enjoyment and soon you'll be able to take much longer trips.

2. Make it comfortable

Dogs and cats should preferably travel in transport cages securely attached in the back seat of a car, or the very rear of a train carriage.

Dogs may also be transported in the rear of a station wagon without a transport cage, if there is a dog guard or protective grating. If they are placed in the back seat they should be secured with a harness and seat belt.

With dogs, however you are transporting them, place them so that they can sit forward. This will help them register that they are travelling in a forward direction, and it will reduce the confusion between what their eye sees and what their inner ear is telling their brain.

With cats it's important to remember that they are very sensitive to new environments and experiences so it's actually better not to transport them by car if it's possible. If it is necessary, take some special precautions to help make it more comfortable for them.

Firstly, ensure they are very familiar with their transport cage before going on a trip. Spray the cage with some synthetic feline hormones a day prior to travelling, and put one of their home blankets and a favourite toy inside.

Keep a special eye on them during the trip, making sure they're comfortable.

Also, try to keep your car environment as quiet and calm as possible. Avoid loud music or loud talking.

3. Just a light meal before travel

If you know you are going on a car trip, try not to feed your dog 6-8 hours beforehand, and two hours beforehand for cats. This will help avoid an upset stomach.

(source:

http://dogtime.com/dog-health/general/20607-canine-car-sickness-what-to-do-about-it(open in new tab))

4. Distract them

If possible, have someone sit next to your pet to take care of them (much more than talking and cleaning up and monitor if they need to have a break) on your car trips. It can be a great way of distracting your pet and reducing anxiety.

It's also helpful to place something from home in their carrier - their favourite toy or blanket - anything that will calm them and give them something to focus on other than the car trip. Go for a bigger walk before you start the car ride, because if they are a bit tired, it is more likely that they sleep while you drive - which is the optimal condition for a first trip.

5. Make frequent stops

Take a break, for you and your pet, at least every two hours.

Stopping more frequently is particularly good for dogs. Not only does it give them a break from the car, it gives them a bathroom break, and a chance to stretch their legs and explore some new terrain.

Cats generally find new environments stressful, so if you do give them a break from their transport cage, it's better to keep them in the car.

Never leave your cat or dog alone in the car, even in the shade or with open windows. Temperatures inside a car can rise very quickly, even on overcast days, and put your pet at risk of heatstroke.

6. Medication

As there are with people, there are also medications that can help pets with

carsickness.

Consult with your veterinarian; they are able to prescribe appropriate medications to treat motion sickness and anxiety in pets.

Synthetic hormones, as mentioned above, can be especially calming for cats and can help them get used to new environments.

Getting carsick is not a nice experience, but with some simple gestures and precautions you can make your next trip comfortable for your pet.

Be patient, focus on positive reinforcement, and use medication if required. Your pet (particularly your dog!) will soon be eager to head out on your next big adventure.

SEE ALL POPULAR ARTICLES

Source URL:

https://www.perfect-fit.co.uk/cat-advice/me-and-my-pet/how-do-i-prevent-my-pet-from-getting-carsick