



If you're going on your first cruise, like most people, you fear you'll get seasick. You're not alone. When I first retired, my spouse asked if we could take a cruise. After serving in the Navy during two wars, I said a definite NO to going back out to sea again.

My reason was a shameful secret. I was afraid that more than a half-century from my last Navy sea duty, and after bragging for all these years about what a great sailor I was ... I feared I'd turn green and make an upchucking fool of myself on my first post-retirement cruise.

I finally agreed to take that cruise, and fortunately my old sea legs prevailed, even when the water got rough, and we've sailed on dozens since. Just in case you have the same fears, here are some suggestions that may help make your first cruise seasick free:

1. Try putting the fear of being seasick out of your mind. Enjoy the excitement of getting aboard and participating in all activities. If you're too busy to worry about being seasick, it may just not happen at all.
2. Before you sail, talk to your doctor about your fears. Maybe a prescription for a scopolamine skin patch can help, or an over-the-counter seasick medicine, such as like Dramamine.

3. If you believe in natural supplements, consider ginger, the old sailor's remedy in its various forms. Eat ginger products before you sail, such as in breads and cakes. Take some ginger powder with you and sprinkle it on your onboard food.
4. If you're a moderate to heavy drinker, swear off booze and beer while you're sailing. One drink too many can make dizziness more pronounced on a pitching deck. Drink lots of water, juices and soft drinks throughout the cruise, because constant hydration helps prevent seasickness.
5. On your first cruise, to be safe and respect your sensitive stomach, stay away from highly-spiced and fried foods. Because cruises usually feature all-you-can-eat dinners, buffets and midnight feasts, don't overdo it nor experiment with unfamiliar French, Italian, Mexican or Thai dishes. If you can't get rid of a slightly woozy feeling after meals, cut back on the amounts you eat aboard.
6. Don't go wild by loading up on several servings of those tempting sweets. Simple desserts, such as fresh fruit and sorbet are more gentle to your stomach than strawberry short cake topped with whipped cream and chocolate ice cream.
7. Throughout the day during all the cruise activities, keep your mouth moist with jelly beans, Life Savers or other hard candy. They can fight feelings of nausea when the ocean waves get a bit bumpy.
8. All large cruise ships have stabilizers that reduce the effects of heavy seas. If you can get an amidships (in the center) cabin on a middle level, at least four decks up from the lowest, you'll be in the most stable area aboard.

If all your prevention routines fail, and before the seasickness can get worse, check in with the ship's doctor or nurse station. They're usually very experienced in dealing with seasickness in first-time cruisers.

And we wish you smooooooth sailing on your first cruise!