DIZZY CLINICS
AUSTRALIA

MAL DE DEBARQUEMENT SYNDROME

What is it?

Mal De Debarquement Syndrome (MdDS) is a rare neurological condition where people feel a persistent rocking, swaying, or bobbing sensation—usually after travel by boat, plane, or other passive motion. The name means "sickness of disembarkment" in French. Symptoms often ease when re-exposed to motion (like riding in a car), which is a unique feature of MdDS.

Common symptoms

- Rocking, swaying or bobbing sensation
- Imbalance and unsteadiness
- Visual motion sensitivity
- Brain fog, anxiety, or low mood
- Symptoms often improve when in motion (e.g. in a car)

Why does it happen?

The brain adapts to continuous motion during travel but sometimes struggles to readjust once the movement stops. This results in a lingering sense of motion even when still. It affects mostly women aged 40–50 and may relate to hormonal or neurological factors.

How is it diagnosed?

Diagnosis is clinical and based on your history. Tests are often normal, so MdDS is usually diagnosed by excluding other conditions. Experienced clinicians can help confirm the diagnosis.

What are the treatments?

- Optokinetic therapy has shown success
- Medications may be used to manage symptoms like anxiety or sleep issues
- Stress management and supportive therapies can help
- Vestibular rehabilitation may assist