

Crew Health & Welfare

2. Fitness

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Introduction

This is one in a series of Loss Prevention Briefings dealing with crew health and welfare. The first briefing deals with illness. This second briefing looks at crew fitness. The third Briefing explains the duty of care that ship operators have towards sea staff in matters of health and welfare.

The first Briefing 'Illness' concludes with a table of 'Staying Healthy' recommendations. Seafarers who follow those recommendations lower their risks of suffering from a wide range of diseases. The table is shown below.



Disclaimer

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This Loss Prevention Briefing will provide advice on each of the seven categories in the above table. Readers are advised that they should always seek professional and/or medical advice before embarking upon any of the programmes listed in this Briefing.

Fitness

No Smoking

Usually, smoking rates for seafarers are higher than for shore workers. This may be because seafarers have a limited choice of leisure activities, compared to shore workers. The dangers of smoking are well publicised. Most smokers have a desire to stop but find the task of stopping smoking very difficult. The next table provides some brief hints on how to make the process of stopping smoking as painless as possible. (Source: [NHS](#))



Think Positive

- Even if you have tried and failed before.
- Tell yourself you will succeed this time!



Make a Plan

- Set a date for stopping and stick to it.
- Don't be distracted by events where you would normally smoke.



Change Diet

- Some food, e.g. meat, may make tobacco taste better.
- Cheese, fruit & vegetables make it taste worse.
- Avoid eating food which makes you want to smoke.



Change Drink

- Fizzy drinks, alcohol, cola, tea and coffee make cigarettes taste better, so drink more water and juice.



Enlist Support

- Colleagues or friends may want to stop too.
- Suggest to them you stop together.



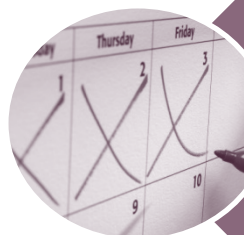
Exercise

- Studies show that exercise cuts cravings.
- Exercise may also help your brain create anti-craving chemicals.



Additional Help

- Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) may help; gums, sprays, lozenges, patches and inhalers.



One Day at a Time

- Mark each successful day on a calendar.
- Look at the calendar when you feel tempted to smoke.



Don't Despair

- If you fail, examine the reasons.
- It will make you stronger the next time.
- Most people need 3-5 attempts to stop.

Little Alcohol

Seafarers traditionally have a higher rate of alcohol consumption than shore workers. Like smoking, the limited choice of leisure activities may be one reason. Alcohol is bad for health. Liver damage, cancer and heart disease are all linked to drinking alcohol. Heavy drinkers are also more at risk of catching infectious diseases. Alcohol contains calories, so drinking too much alcohol is linked to weight gain. High alcohol consumption can also be linked to depression. A hangover can leave the sufferer feeling low. Existing feelings of sadness or anxiety, which are also more prevalent among seafarers, can be made worse by alcohol. People who already suffer from high blood pressure or diabetes can make their conditions worse by drinking alcohol. Also see [the risks of drinking too much - Live Well - NHS Choices](#).

The table below lists some points that can assist if the decision is made to cut down, or cease alcohol consumption. However, for those who were drinking too much to begin with, cutting down or stopping drinking alcohol can have side effects, some of which can be potentially serious. Physical symptoms including trembling hands, nausea, sweating and appetite loss are signs that the sufferer may have been drinking at worryingly high levels before stopping. Severe side effects include convulsions, fever and hallucinations. Even moderate drinkers can suffer from temporary side effects if they cut down or stop drinking; such as being tired, irritable or unable to sleep. The more serious alcohol withdrawal symptoms need to be treated by health professionals. Also see [Cut down on alcohol with our easy drink swaps | Change4Life](#).



Eat & Non-alcoholic Drinks

- Always accompany drink with food.
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic.
- Experiment with 'Mocktails' (non-alcoholic cocktails).



Set Targets & Keep Track

- Have 'no drink' days.
- Set limits for other days.
- Record number and size of drinks taken.



Avoid Temptation

- Avoid people & places that encourage you to drink.
- Know when to say 'no'
- Remind yourself of the good reasons for change.



Discover Alternatives

- Develop new and healthier hobbies.



Fitness

Healthy Diet

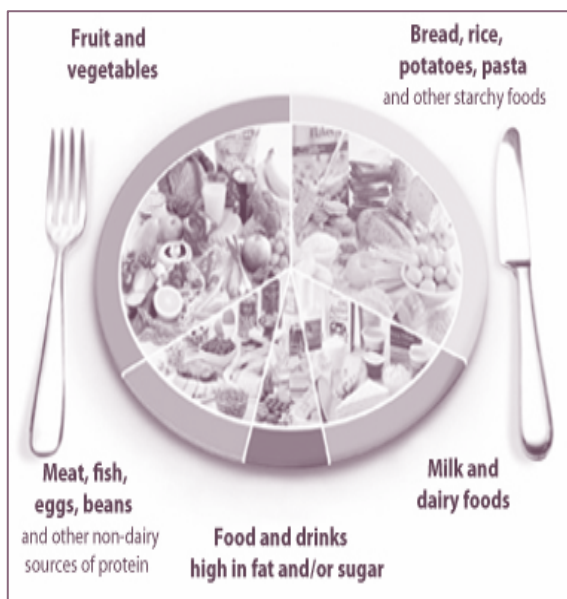
The eating habits of the western world have spread world-wide. Unfortunately, some of these eating habits have bad side effects, especially for health. Obesity, cancer and heart disease are all closely linked to a diet having high levels of fat, sugar, salt, artificial additives and chemicals. Seafarers should aim for a balanced diet.

Health authorities in countries where diets high in fat and sugar are real problems, such as the United Kingdom and United States produce online advice on healthy eating. See links below:

[National Health Service \(NHS\)](#)

[Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion \(ODPHP\)](#)

The UK NHS and many other health authorities have adopted the 'Eatwell Plate', shown below. This highlights the different types of food and the proportions in which they should be eaten in order to have a healthy, balanced diet.



Seafarers may feel that they can have little influence on the food that they are served on board. However, there are some things that seafarers can try to do, in order to have a good diet at sea. The next table lists some of those things. They are taken from '[Balance Your Diet](#)' an article first published by the International Transport Workers' federation (ITF) in 2003.



Ask cook to use unsaturated fats.



Request that food be poached, grilled or baked, rather than fried.



Ask for fresh fruit and vegetables to be supplied during port calls.



Stock up with fresh fruit when on shore leave.



Drink more water. At least 2 litres a day*.

(* Seafarers working in extreme heat should drink 150 – 200 ml of fluids every 15-20 minutes).

Fitness

Regular Exercise

"If exercise were a pill, it would be one of the most cost-effective drugs ever invented". This is a quote from the [UK NHS Choices website](#). The same website provides many tips on how to become physically fit and how to maintain fitness.

There is also a project aimed specifically at seafarers, set up by the Norwegian Maritime Authority for the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network ([ISWAN](#)).



The programme, titled 'Training on Board' can be accessed by clicking on the 'TOB' image below. The purpose of the Training on Board programme is to persuade seafarers to pursue a healthy lifestyle. An online calculator allows seafarers to measure their fitness. There is also the opportunity to enjoy competition with shipmates, other crews and other companies.



The UK based charity; The Seafarers Hospital Society in association with The Physical Initiative has also produced a diet and exercise guide for seafarers, which can be downloaded by clicking on the Seafarers Hospital image below.



To stay healthy, adults aged between 19-64 should try to be active daily and should do:

At least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity such as fast walking every week.

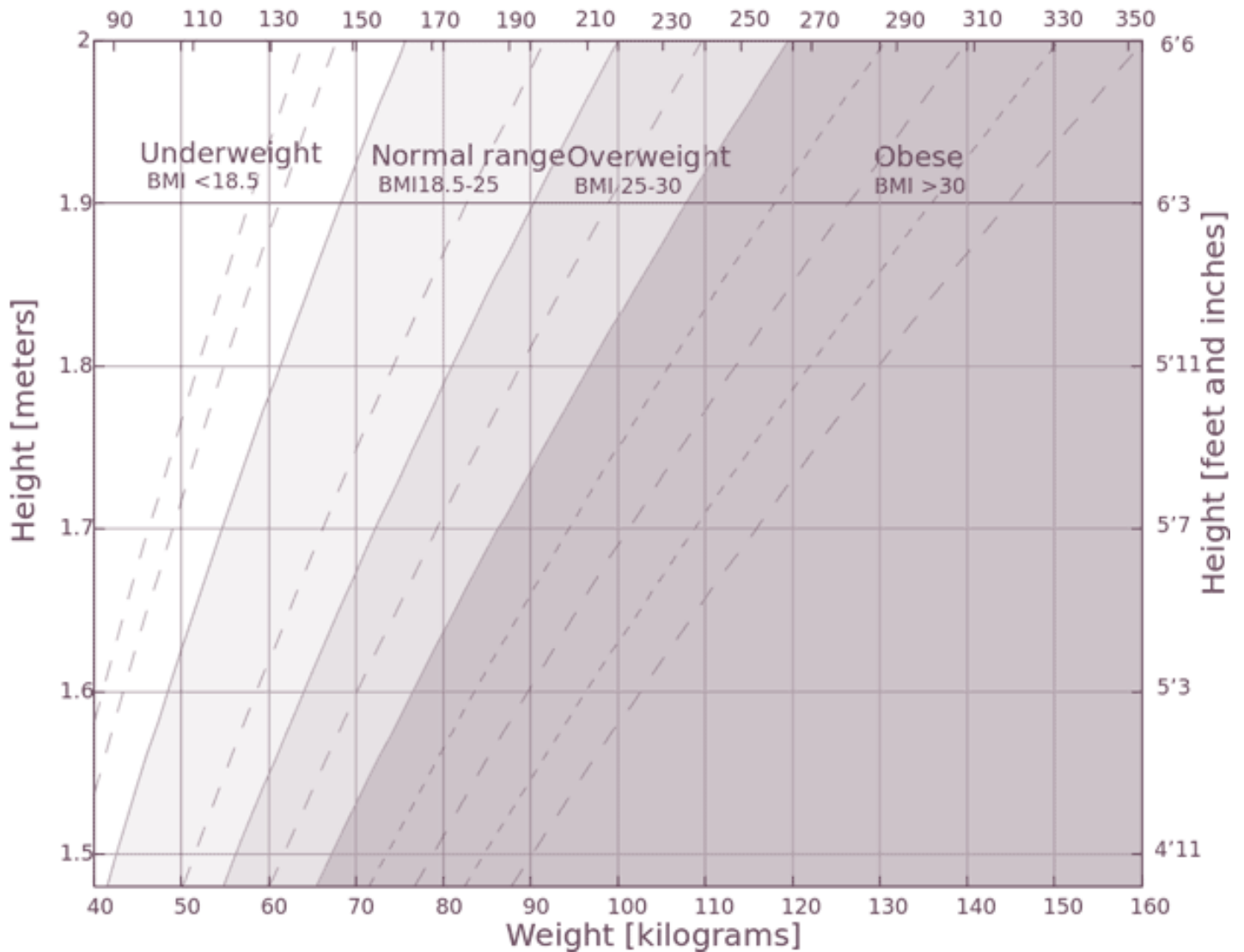
AND

Strength exercises on two or more days per week that will work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms). Examples of muscle strengthening activities include push-ups, sit-ups, yoga and weight lifting.

Healthy Weight

A good diet combined with a sensible exercise regime will help ensure that a healthy weight is achieved and maintained. One of the simplest and most widely accepted ways of measuring if a person is overweight is by using Body Mass Index (BMI), which is defined as the body mass (in kilogrammes) divided by the square of the body height (in metres). According to the World Health Organisation, the goal for individuals should be to achieve a BMI in the range 18.5 to 24.9 kg/m². A height/weight chart is shown below. Also see [Lose weight - Live Well - NHS Choices](#).

Weight [pounds]



Good Hygiene

Hygiene on board can be divided into personal hygiene and food hygiene. An additional factor to consider is the quality of drinking water on board.

Personal Hygiene

The below table lists the key points for ensuring a reasonable level of personal hygiene. Also see Australian Department of Health website: [Personal hygiene](#)



Body

- Shower at least once per day
- More often if required



Teeth

- Clean teeth at least twice a day
- Brushing after every meal is best



Hair

- Wash with shampoo
- Every day if necessary



Hands

- Wash after going to toilet
- Wash before handling food



Clothes

- Wash with laundry detergent regularly



Etiquette

- Cover nose and mouth with tissue when coughing or sneezing

Fitness

Food Hygiene

Poor food hygiene can be disastrous on board ship. Food poisoning can affect the entire crew and render the ship immobile. The UK Marine & Coastguard Agency (UKMCA), in their [Merchant Shipping Notice \(MSN\) 1845](#), "Maritime Labour Convention, 2006: Food and Catering: Provision of Food and Fresh Water" list the ten main reasons for food poisoning occurring on ships. The list is reproduced in the next table, below.

Preparation of food too far in advance and stored at room temperature.	Cooling food too slowly prior to refrigeration.*	Not reheating food to high enough temperatures.
Using contaminated food.	Undercooking.	Infected food handlers.
Storing hot food below 63°C.	Cross contamination from raw to cooked food.	Not thawing frozen for sufficient time.
	Improper use of leftovers.	

**For example using larder with lower room temperature, using ice water bath, splitting large amount into smaller batches can all speed up the cooling process.*

Fitness

Seahealth is an independent non-profit making body based in Denmark. Seahealth's main purpose is improving the safety, health and well-being of seafarers. The Seahealth website can be accessed by clicking on the image below.



Seahealth has developed 'Hygiene in the Galley', which provides guidance and advice for ship-owners, masters and cooks in three parts, each of which can be downloaded from the publications section of the Seahealth website.

Galley hygiene related to cooking meat is also covered in North's 'Hot Spot' on Galley Safety, which can be accessed in the 'Loss Prevention Publications' section of the [North Website](#). The relevant section and pictures are reprinted below:



When cooking meat:

- Ensure hands are clean at all times.
- Wear correct, clean and hygienic PPE.
- Ensure poultry, pork, offal, sausages, burgers, rolled meat joints and kebabs are all cooked thoroughly.
- Use meat thermometer to ensure meat is cooked through.

Fitness

The supply and storage of ship's fresh water is covered in Annex 2 of MSN 1845. Ship's drinking water is also covered in [The World Health Organisation \(WHO\) 'Guide to Ship Sanitation'](#). Also Seahealth produce guidance on [drinking water](#) on board ships.

The effects of a ship's crew consuming contaminated water can be equally as devastating as food poisoning. Analysis of outbreaks of illness arising from contaminated water on board ships has shown that sewage is one of the most common sources of contamination.

The safety of the fresh water supply on board is best ensured by developing a risk-based Fresh Water Safety Plan (FWSP) that is incorporated into the ship's planned maintenance system (PMS). The table below lists some of the points to consider when developing an FWSP. The list is not exhaustive and readers are advised to consult the websites listed above for more comprehensive guidance.

System

- Identify all possible contamination sources in fresh water (FW) system
 - Implement suitable controls
 - Include within PMS

Treatment

- Document types & quantities of additives
- Document FW bunkering ports & precautions needed for each
 - Have FW quality checked regularly

Operations

- Regularly check taste, smell & clarity of FW
- Include corrective/preventative measures in SMS
- Establish routines for cleaning/flushing ALL parts of system, especially rarely used cabins etc.

What If?

- Document what to do if water is contaminated
 - Should it be boiled?
 - Provide bottled water?
 - Chlorinate entire system?

Fitness

Enough Rest

Fatigue is detrimental to good health. North produced a Loss Prevention Briefing entitled '[Fatigue](#)' in September 2015. That Briefing should be consulted in conjunction with this section.

Mental Problems

However, even if all of the criteria for ensuring adequate rest are met on board, there may be other reasons that prevent individual seafarers from enjoying trouble-free rest periods. Mental distress is one cause of disturbed rest.

In the previous Loss Prevention Briefing in this series, entitled 'Illness', mental problems were discussed and some tips for relieving those problems listed. There are also a variety of agencies around the world that can help seafarers who are suffering from depression and/or stress. ISWAN have a 24/7 assistance service, provided by SeafarerHelp, accessible by clicking on the icon below.



SeafarerHelp, although based in Croydon, UK, can provide assistance in many languages and they can be contacted by:

- Phone: +44 20 7323 2737
- Email: help@seafarerhelp.org
- SMS text +44 7624 818 405
- Also available via Skype or Live Chat.

They also provide a call back service. The service is free and available to all seafarers and their family members.

Additionally, Seafarers may obtain assistance from locally based organisations in ports of call or home countries. One such organisation that is available to seafarers of any nationality visiting Australian waters is Hunterlink Recovery Services. Their website is accessible by clicking the following image:



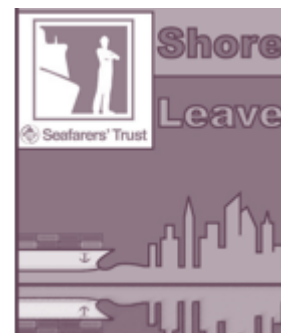
They offer a free 24/7 helpline in Australia

- Tel: 1800554654
- email: enquiry@hunterlinkservices.org.au

Hunterlink's experienced counsellors can assist with issues like:

- Drug and alcohol issues
- Suicide prevention and dealing with suicidal feelings
- Anger management
- Relationship issues
- Problem gambling
- Managing financial issues
- Workplace issues such as bullying and harassment
- Dealing with grief, loneliness, relationship breakdown and anxiety
- Substance abuse

Many seafarers' centres can provide confidential advice to seafarers. The location of seafarer centres around the world can now be accessed via the ShoreLeave smartphone application, which is available as free download for [Android](#), [i-phone](#) or [BlackBerry](#). The application is sponsored by the ITF Seafarers Trust, which also supports ISWAN and Hunterlink.



Fitness

In January 2015 the Sailors Society, one of the largest seafarer support charities operating internationally, launched their 'Wellness at Sea' programme.

The programme, accessible by clicking the image below, seeks to address five specific needs of seafarers:

- social,
- emotional,
- physical
- intellectual,
- spiritual.



It is a coaching programme designed for officers and requires buy-in from employers. The programme is unique in that it is the first to focus on the prevention of mental health problems associated with a career at sea. One of the driving forces behind the Wellness at Sea initiative is the sobering statistic that according to the IMO, the rate of suicide of international seafarers is triple that of shore workers.

Useful Links

The following Table provides details of the organisations and websites listed in this Briefing. There are also some additional websites listed. Although not referred to directly in the Briefing, these additional websites do contain much useful information.

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE	DETAILS
ITF Seafarers Health	http://www.itfseafarers.org/ITI-health.cfm	General information on health and welfare. Also provides links to other websites that provide help with stopping smoking, drinking, healthy eating etc.
UK NHS Choices	http://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx	A wide range of advice on many health and welfare issues.
USA ODPHP	http://health.gov/	A lot of useful advice on diet and fitness.
Australian Department of Health – Environmental Health	http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l~ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch3~ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch3.7	Personal hygiene guide.
International Seafarers Welfare & Assistance Network (ISWAN)	http://www.seafarerswelfare.org/	Provides direct welfare services to seafarers.
Training on Board	https://www.trainingonboard.org/	Physical fitness programme specifically for seafarers.
“Get Fit”	http://www.seahospital.org.uk/pdf/16201%20PI%20fitness%20book_v3.pdf	Fitness book for seafarers, downloadable in PDF format.
Seafarers Hospital Society	http://www.seahospital.org.uk/	UK based charity dedicated to health, welfare and advice for seafarers.
The Physical Initiative	http://www.physicalinitiative.co.uk/	Provide health awareness programmes for seafarers. Aimed at shipping companies, rather than individuals.
BMI Calculator	http://www.freebmiccalculator.net/	Body mass index calculator.
UK Marine & Coastguard Agency	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/440239/1845_Food_and_Water.pdf	MSN 1845: Maritime Labour Convention, 2006: provision of food and fresh water.
Seahealth Denmark	http://www.seahealth.dk/	Deals with issues affecting seafarer health and working environment.
North	www.nepia.com	Rich source of information on many health & safety issues.
World Health Organisation	http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2011/ship_sanitation_guide/en/	WHO Guide to ship sanitation.

Fitness

SeafarerHelp	http://www.seafarerhelp.org/	24/7 advice helpline for seafarers worldwide.
Hunterlink	http://hunterlink.org.au/index.php	Advice for seafarers of all nationalities suffering from mental health or addiction issues. Exclusive to Australian coast.
ITF Seafarer Trust	http://www.seafarerstrust.org/	UK based charity dedicated to spiritual, moral and physical welfare of seafarers, irrespective of nationality, race or creed.
Shore Leave App	https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.seafarers https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/shore-leave/id604337849?ls=1&mt=8 https://appworld.blackberry.com/webstore/content/19967546/?lang=en	Downloadable application for android, i-phone and blackberries. Gives addresses and contact details for seafarer centres worldwide.
Sailors Society	http://www.sailors-society.org/	Christian charity providing welfare care and practical support for seafarers around the world.
Wellness at Sea	http://www.sailors-society.org/ourprojects/wellness/	Coaching programme aimed at improving seafarers' on board well-being.