

Focusing on Seafarer Wellbeing – Healthy diet and lifestyle

Seafarer wellbeing has been a focal topic for The Standard Club's Loss Prevention team, particularly in recent years. Seafarer wellbeing is a holistic concept combining physical, mental, and social wellbeing. People often forget how mental and physical wellbeing are linked. You can only be as happy as you are healthy, in body and mind!

This article focuses on physical wellbeing: healthy diet and lifestyle.

The old saying goes that 'you are what you eat'. This certainly is true - our food intake is responsible for our growth, maintenance, reproduction and health. This article can help you understand how to maintain a healthy diet onboard a ship, so you eat the right amount of the right things.

What to eat?

Food is a mishmash of sugars (carbohydrates), fats (lipids), proteins, vitamins and minerals. Carbohydrates and lipids give us energy, the former providing ready fuel and the latter storage. Proteins do most of the work in our cells and are required for the structure, function and regulation of the body's tissues and organs. Vitamins and minerals are substances in food that are necessary for physiological processes in the body.

A healthy eating plan:

1. emphasises fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
2. includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts
3. is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars
4. stays within your daily calorie needs.

A balanced diet is a healthy diet.

Ideal body weight

There are many ways to determine your ideal weight. The most common method is by Body Mass Index (BMI), which can be derived by the equation:

$$\text{BMI} = \text{Weight in kilograms} / (\text{Height in metres})^2.$$

Once you have your BMI number, compare it to the below table from the World Health Organization to see if it is in the normal, recommended range.

	BMI
Underweight	<18.5
Normal	18.5-24.9



Overweight	25-29.9
Obese	<30

How much to eat?

We can measure food intake by calorie consumption. Different foods have a different number of calories per gram of weight. On average, males need 2,400 to 2,600 calories per day, whereas females need 1,600 to 2,000 calories per day.

These averages are affected by physical activity. For example, the captain on the bridge takes fewer steps per day than an able seaman, so will need fewer calories. Other factors that determine calorie expenditure are gender, age and metabolism. From a survey of marine officers, here are some examples of the level of activity required to perform different roles on board:

Rank	Sedentary or light activity (eg, an office worker)	Active or moderate activity (eg, a construction worker)	Vigorously active (eg, a farmer)
Master	○		
Chief officer		○	
Second officer		○	
Third officer		○	
Bosun			○
Able seaman			○
Ordinary seaman			○
Chief engineer	○		
Second engineer		○	
Third engineer			○
Fourth engineer			○
Oiler/fitter/machinist			○
Wiper			○
Activity correction factor	1.5	1.7	2.2

How many calories should you consume to maintain your current weight?

1. Men: (weight in pounds x 11) x activity correction factor
2. Women: (weight in pounds x 10) x activity correction factor

A healthy lifestyle

Consuming more or less than your body needs will lead to unhealthy consequences. Calorie intake should match your activity level to maintain weight or be rebalanced to help reduce or gain weight.

Your health is in your hands, it is a personal choice to live a healthy lifestyle. You can start taking responsibility of your diet by avoiding unhealthy foods that are high in sugar, salt, saturated and trans fats and eating the right amount to fuel the body without overeating.

Junk food is high in calories and low in nutritional value, so you should try to avoid them. A bowl of white rice is approximately 200 calories, which would require a person to walk approximately 3km to burn it off. Comparatively, a fried chicken drumstick is about 120 calories and a Big Mac is 250 calories. Steamed food, grilled vegetables or Japanese sashimi are healthy alternatives.



In order to maintain a healthy lifestyle, a seafarer must carefully balance food intake with regular exercise. So, if you eat more, remember to exercise more. Take care and know your limits. Moderation is key!

Next time **think twice before you reach for a second bowl of white rice!**

With thanks to Jason Roland N Valdez, MD, MPH Medical Director CarePoint Medical Diagnostic and Wellness Clinic.

Keep a look out for the other poster sets covering mental wellbeing, socialisation and fitness and exercise. To find out more information about these elements of seafarer wellbeing, you can view the full articles on each, here: <https://www.standard-club.com/risk-management/knowledge-centre/news-and-commentary/2019/11/news-seafarer-wellbeing-poster-campaign.aspx>

To access further information, and guidance particularly for shipowners and crew, read our special edition of Standard Safety: Seafarer Wellbeing, here: <https://www.standard-club.com/media/2767887/standard-safety-seafarer-wellbeing-october-2018.pdf>