

Focusing on Seafarer Wellbeing – Fitness and Exercise

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, in particular fitness and exercise.

Your lifestyle choices will directly impact your health. Exercise is a key component of this equation.

Why exercise?

Obesity is one of the major causes of hypertension, diabetes and many other conditions, including coronary artery disease. Obesity itself affects your ability to carry out duties when speed of reaction and agility may be required to use ladders, enter hatches or access confined machinery spaces, particularly in an emergency or bad weather.

How to exercise

You should engage in at least 30 minutes of exercise a day to improve physical fitness and to provide a mental break from the daily routine.

Your activity level should match your calorie intake to maintain your weight. If you want to gain or lose weight, balance your activity and food accordingly. Climbing a flight of stairs will burn five calories while walking one kilometre will burn about 60 calories.

Even moderate increases in activity levels can have a positive impact on your health. Simple exercises such as those listed below can mean the difference between a long career or one that is cut short by ill health. Instead of taking the lift, climb the stairs and aim for 10,000 steps each day.

Exercise with others

Exercise does not have to be boring. Doing exercise with others can help to maintain motivation and commitment. Team sports provide a good physical and mental workout, as these both improve the cardiovascular system and promote friendship with other seafarers. Examples could include cricket (on a large enough ship), basketball, tug of war or ping pong.

Exercise alone

A basic cardio workout maintains the cardiovascular fitness by increasing heart rate and improving muscle tone. Here are eight simple exercises which you can do even in a small space like a cabin, and no equipment is needed. They should take around eight minutes a day if done properly.

Do each activity for 45 seconds, resting 15 seconds between each one and remaining hydrated throughout:

1. running on the spot



2. jumping jacks
3. lunges
4. push-ups
5. mountain climbers
6. squats
7. leg raises
8. planks

If you are older or physically unable to do all these exercises, walking 10,000 steps a day can still help you improve your health. This will burn calories, make your heart healthier, and over time you may be ready to do more exercises. Walking the length of the ship many times a day can easily bring you close to the 10,000 steps or 9 kilometres. If you stick to this goal of 10,000 steps a day, it adds up to burning about 3,500 extra calories a week.

With thanks to Antonio Roberto M Abaya Medical Director, Health Metrics Inc

Keep a look out for the other poster sets covering physical wellbeing: healthy diet and lifestyle, socialisation, and mental wellbeing. 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>