

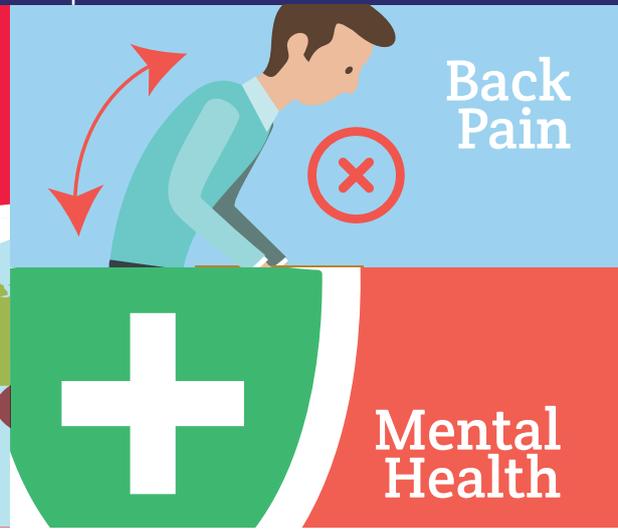
## Weight & BMI



## Malaria



## Back Pain



## Diet & Exercise

## Mental Health

# Lifestyle changes can improve your wellbeing

**This is the second part of the Britannia Health Watch round up of the 'Top 10' medical conditions that we encounter when speaking with ship owners and their manning agents at Britannia seminars and also when analysing the claims that are handled by the Club. Our aim is to provide people with a reminder of some of the more common conditions, together with some simple ways to keep healthy and feeling well.**

In the first part which came out in April ([www.britanniapandi.com/publications/health-watch](http://www.britanniapandi.com/publications/health-watch)) we looked at diabetes, hypertension, kidney stones, cancer and digestive problems. In this edition we focus on mental health issues, weight and body mass index (BMI), diet and exercise, back pain and malaria. As well as giving some basic facts about what symptoms to watch out for, we also offer guidance on some simple steps that you can take – such as adopting a balanced and healthy diet and making sure that you exercise regularly – that can help to reduce the risk of suffering from these conditions.

When considering weight and BMI concerns, it is not necessary to make drastic changes to your lifestyle to see an improvement. Even if a few simple steps are followed, with small changes to diet and adding some exercise into daily routines, you will quickly feel the benefits. This will not only make the working environment seem easier, but will also have a very positive impact on home life and leisure activities. There are many ways to enjoy a more varied and healthy

diet, even within the confines of a ship's galley, and there is a growing awareness that the food we eat has a direct link to our health and wellbeing.

With mental health, there is a much greater awareness of the issues and an improved understanding that such conditions can be very serious if left undiagnosed or untreated. However, it is still hard for many people to admit that they may have a mental health problem and it is important for all members of the ship's team to look out for their fellow crew. Social interaction and group activities have been proven to help lessen the feelings of depression and isolation which many experience when on board ship.

We hope you find this summary issue of Health Watch both interesting and informative. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or suggestions on other topics that you would like to see included in future editions of Health Watch.

# Mental Health

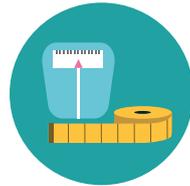
**Long periods of time away from home can leave many seafarers feeling stressed, lonely and even depressed. Check your colleagues for indicators and symptoms of stress or depression.**

It may be that you feel just a little low but depression can be a serious problem and it is important that you seek help quickly. As well as feeling continuously low or sad, hopeless and helpless, it can have physical effects on your body.

## Symptoms include:



*Moving or speaking more slowly than usual*



*Change in appetite or weight (usually decreased but sometimes increased)*



*Unexplained aches and pains*



*Constipation*



*Loss of Libido*



*Disturbed sleep*

## Beating stress and depression



*Seek medical help*



*Interact socially with crew mates, whether watching TV or playing cards*



*Talk to someone you trust*



*Eat well*



*Get enough sleep*



*Keep active*



*Try to keep in touch with friends and family via the phone or internet*



*Seek help*

## People and organisations who can help:

**Port chaplains** – are trained to offer support and comfort, whether you simply feel homesick or are experiencing a personal crisis.

**SeafarerHelp** – a confidential service, where staff speak 27 different languages.

Call: 00 44 20 7323 2737 email: [help@seafarerhelp.org](mailto:help@seafarerhelp.org) [www.seafarerhelp.org](http://www.seafarerhelp.org)

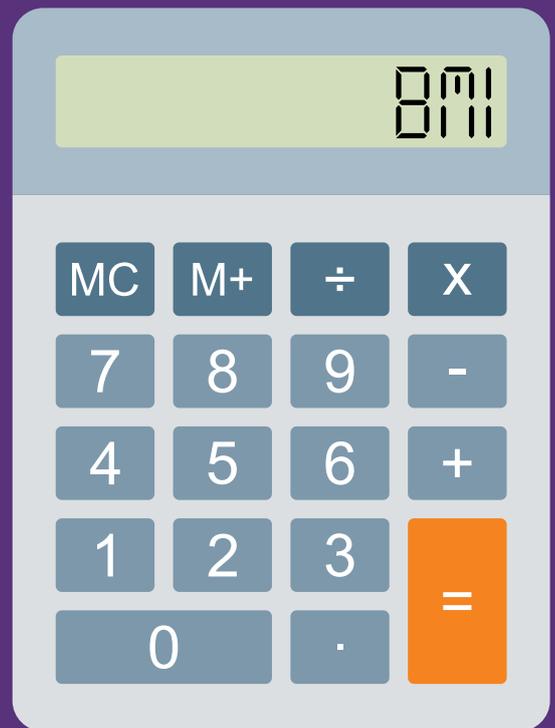
# Weight & BMI

To determine what your ideal body weight should be, several factors should be considered including your age, muscle-fat ratio, height, sex and bone density. It is worth remembering that one person's ideal body weight may be completely different to another's.

Some health professionals suggest that calculating your Body Mass Index (BMI) is the best way to decide whether your body weight is ideal.

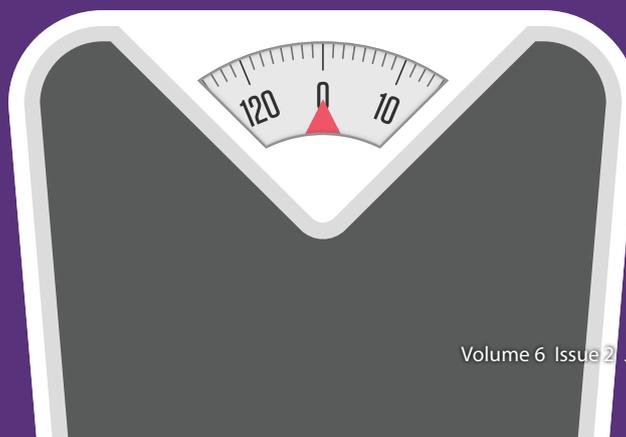
Your BMI is worked out by dividing your weight (kg) by your height (metres) and by then dividing this answer by your height again.

For example, if you weigh 90kg and you are 1.80m tall, divide 90 by 1.80. The answer is 50. Then divide this answer by 1.80 again – the answer is 27.7.



1  $90 \div 1.80 = 50$

2  $50 \div 1.80 = 27.7$



# Diet & Exercise

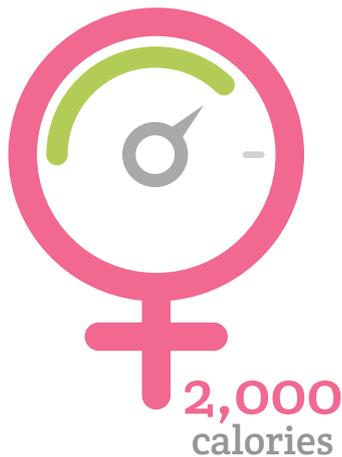
**Obesity has become a big problem for many seafarers with poor diet and lack of exercise being the main causes.**

Many are eating more than they need to and it is often the wrong type of food and not being able to burn off the calories leads to them piling on the weight.

Eating and drinking more calories than we need to can cause many different health problems including increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, back problems and even some cancers.

## How much should you eat?

As a general rule the average a man needs around 2,500 calories a day and a woman 2,000 calories a day to maintain a healthy body weight.



**Cut down on caffeine**

No more than 4 cups of coffee a day



**Don't skip meals,** particularly breakfast



**Drink 8 glasses of water a day**



**Try to avoid high fat food (especially saturated fat) and sugar**



**Reduce fried foods**



**Eat fruit or nuts as a snack** and avoid high fat snacks



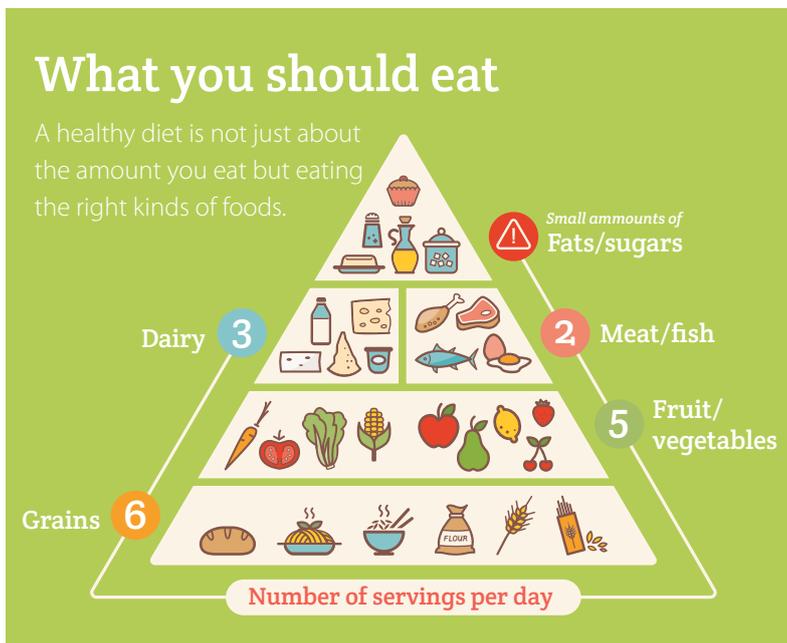
**Eat sensible portions**



**Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day**



**Eat 30-40g fibre per day**



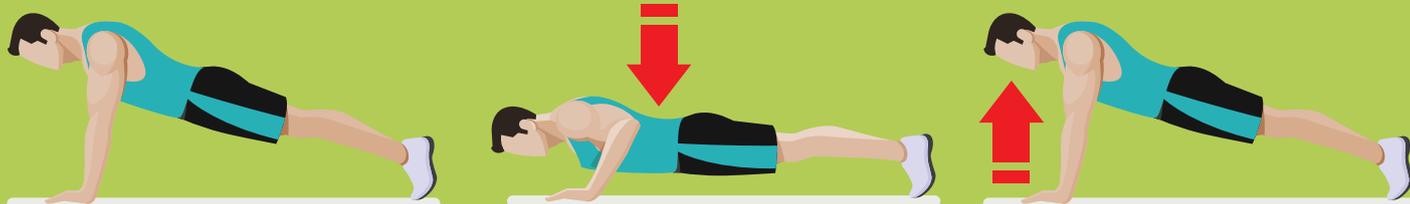
# Exercise

Exercise is important not only for keeping fit and preventing health problems, but also in helping to stay mentally healthy and avoiding fatigue.

Adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week, such as fast walking or cycling. This can be divided up into 30-minute sections five days a week and you can even split those 30-minute sessions into smaller sessions of at least 10 minutes.

You might feel too tired to exercise, but regular exercise will make you feel less tired in the long run, and you'll have more energy.

Staying fit can be accomplished by push-ups or sit-ups in your cabin, using improvised weights made out of tin cans, exercising with a colleague and taking aerobic exercise like walking briskly.



## Salt

Salt raises blood pressure – most of our salt intake comes from processed foods such as bread, cheese, bottled sauces, cured meats and ready-made meals.

You should have no more than **5g** a day – the same as a small teaspoonful.

# Back Pain

**Aging, obesity and being unfit can all contribute to back pain so try to maintain a healthy weight and eat a well-balanced diet containing enough calcium and Vitamin D which helps your bones.**

Keeping your back strong and supple is the best way to avoid getting back pain and ways to do this include regular exercise, good posture and lifting correctly.

## Exercise



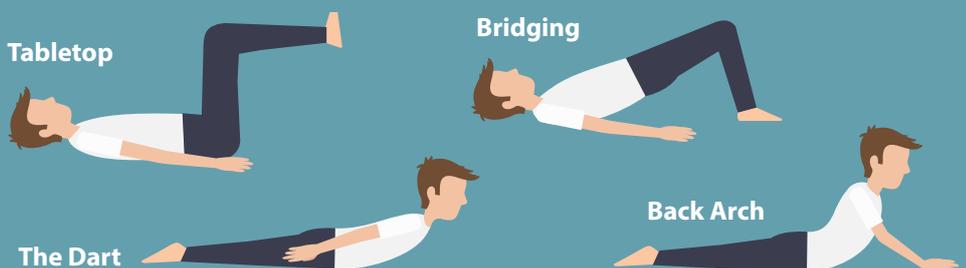
Keeping fit is an excellent way of preventing and reducing back pain



But you should seek medical advice before starting an exercise programme, especially if you have had back pain for more than six weeks.



Walking is ideal as it strengthens the muscles that support your back without putting any strain on it.



Tabletop

Bridging

The Dart

Back Arch

**Back Exercises**

# Safe Lifting

Learning and following the correct method for lifting and handling heavy loads can help to prevent injury and back pain. Lifting when a ship is rolling can put additional stress on backs so take extra care and ask for assistance if required.



## *Know your limits*

Don't lift or handle more than you can easily manage



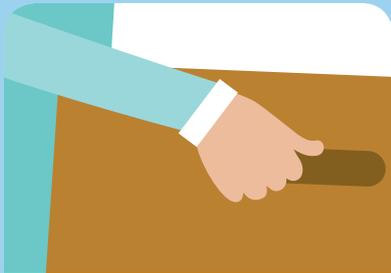
## *Think before you lift*

Plan the lift



## *Keep the load close to the waist*

Adopt a stable position



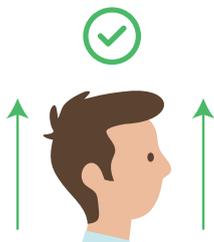
## *Ensure a good hold on the load*



## *Don't bend or flex your back*



## *Don't twist when you lift*



## *Keep your head up*



## *Move smoothly*



## *Lower down, then adjust*

# Malaria

**Malaria is a serious tropical disease spread by mosquitoes which, if not diagnosed and treated quickly, can be fatal. A single mosquito bite is all it takes to become infected. You cannot be vaccinated against malaria, but you can take steps to protect yourself against this disease.**

It is mainly found in tropical and subtropical countries of the world.



## Symptoms



*Fever*



*Sweats & Chills*



*Headaches*



*Vomiting*



*Muscle Pains*



*Diarrhoea*

## Prevention



*Be risk aware*



*Use insect repellent on exposed skin and impregnated mosquito nets*



*Cover arms and legs*



*Seek immediate medical advice if you develop symptoms*



*Take medical advice on anti-malarial medication if going into a high risk area*



*Close windows in ports in malaria-affected areas and use air conditioning instead*