



# safe travel

**you are part of it ! ...**

**Seafarers' Health Information Programme**

**Healthier, fitter, safer ...**





**Be well  
prepared  
for a trip !**

### **Plan health protection !**

- Gather information about the health hazards in the ports to be visited
- Communicate with the company about the precautions that need to be taken
- Visit the company medical service, your doctor or travel clinic and obtain the necessary prescriptions, vaccinations and prophylactic (protective and preventive) medication
- Visit your dentist for a check-up, especially if your last check-up dates back more than 6 months

Carry appropriate medical information such as any health conditions or allergies that you have and any medication you are taking, in written format, in English.

### **Carry necessary travel documents, e.g. :**

- Blood Group Card
- International Vaccination Certificate
- Allergy Card or a medical alert bracelet

**If you wear glasses, take an extra pair !**

# 1

## Personal Protection

### Protect yourself from the sun by :

- wearing sunglasses
- applying a good sunscreen with a high protection factor
- wearing a cap, like "SHIP's COOL CAP"

### Protect yourself from heatstroke by :

- drinking adequate amounts of liquid
- adding extra salt to normal food preparation
- taking sufficient rest

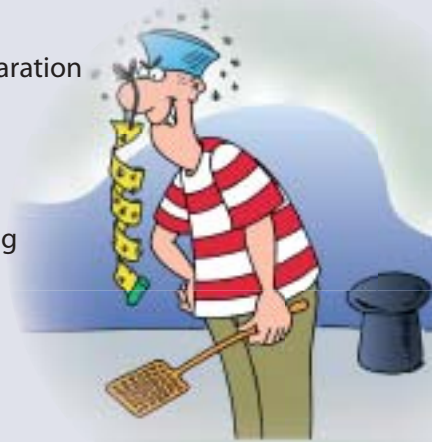
### Protect yourself from the cold by :

- wearing several layers of loose clothing
- keeping clothes dry
- eating plenty of food
- avoiding alcohol

### Protect yourself from insects by :

- covering ventilation holes with nets
- using insect repellents
- using impregnated bed nets and sleeping in screened accommodation

**Leave animals alone; seek medical advice if you are bitten.**



# 2

**Malaria** is a parasite infection, transmitted by mosquito-bites. The disease occurs in plenty tropical and subtropical areas and can be serious and even deadly.

It is often necessary to take preventative medication, even after returning home.

**Contact your company** and find out the itinerary of the ship and the possible malaria risk, they will also provide you with information and guidance on the preventive measures taken onboard. Consult the company medical service or your doctor to get the necessary medication (different types of medicines are used depending on the geographic area).

**Alarm signal :** fever above 38°C for longer than 24 hours.

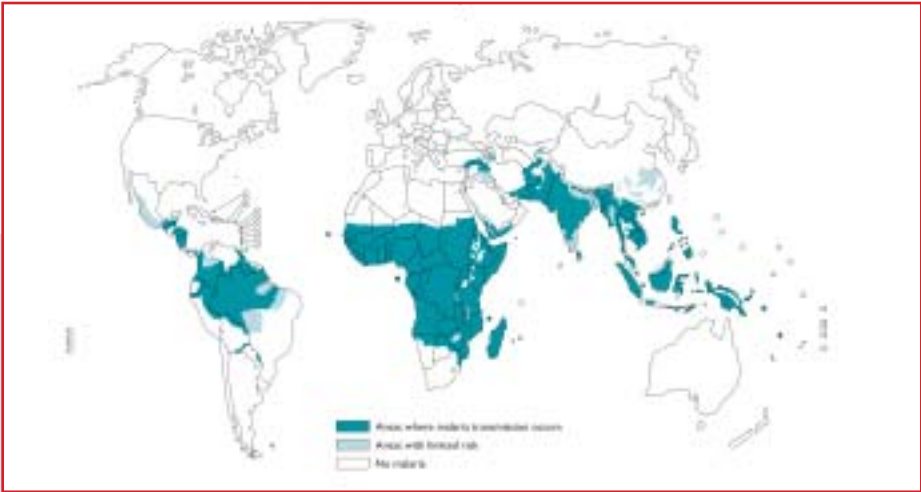
**Other symptoms :** headache, fatigue, diarrhoea and vomiting.

In spite of their effectiveness and even when used correctly, medication against malaria cannot guarantee full protection. In case of fever after returning from a malaria-endemic area, seek medical assistance to rule out malaria.

**It is essential to protect against mosquito-bites :**

- Wear light colored clothes after sunset, that cover the whole body
- Use an insect-repellent (with at least 20% DEET) on all other uncovered areas  
Attention : these products are only active for a couple of hours.  
Reapply them regularly (every 4 hours)
- Protect your cabin or bed with a mosquito-net, preferably impregnated with insecticides

Malaria risk zones :



**Dengue** is a common tropical infection.

It is transmitted by mosquitoes (*Aedes* species) that bite during the day. In contrast with other infections such as malaria it does not occur predominantly in rural areas but also in urban areas.

**Symptoms and signs** : high fever, headache, muscle ache and joint pains.

**Alarm signals** : bleeding, strong decrease in blood pressure.

No treatment is available, dengue heals by itself in time.  
Use paracetamol (not aspirin) as pain relief. There is no vaccine.

Measures to prevent mosquito-bites are essential (see point 2 Malaria) :

- The mosquitoes that spread this disease bite during the day
- When using a sunblock together with an insect-repellent (with DEET) it is advisable to apply both together and to protect yourself with a high UV protection

Dengue risk zones :



Vaccination against **tetanus** is indispensable for seafarers. The vaccination against **diphtheria** is especially recommended for seafarers going to tropical and subtropical areas and indispensable for seafarers travelling to former Soviet Union states. It is recommended that seafarers are immunised against tetanus and diphtheria every 10 years.

In order for seafarers to be completely immune, their last vaccination should not have been more than 10 years ago.

Those who last had a vaccination more than 20 years ago, should have 2 doses administered within 6 months.

Of all the infections that can be prevented by vaccine, **Hepatitis A** is generally the most frequent disease in travellers. Infection takes place through food, drinks and lack of hygiene. **Hepatitis B** is transmitted by sexual contact and by blood (transfusions in some countries, sharing needles, piercings and tattoos). Hepatitis B may develop into chronic hepatitis and carriers may infect other people.

**Hepatitis A prevention :** personal and food hygiene. Immunisation.

**Vaccination** against hepatitis A is important for seafarers. 2 injections, the second between 6 months and 1 year after the first, give protection for more than 25 years, and probably for life.

**Hepatitis B prevention :** it is important that seafarers limit their risk behaviour. Risk behaviour is not only, occasional sexual contact, drug injections, tattoos and piercings but also occupational accidents and medical or dental treatment abroad.

**Vaccination for hepatitis B** is possible with 3 injections. The second should be administered 1 month after the first and the third should be within 6 months to 1 year after the first.

**Combined vaccination** against hepatitis A and B is possible with 3 injections. The second should be administered 1 month after the first and the third should be within 6 months to 1 year after the first.

# 6

**Poliomyelitis** is a crippling disease caused by a virus. Infection is still possible in certain areas in Africa and Asia.

One repeat vaccination (booster) for an adult who has been vaccinated during childhood is sufficient for lifelong protection.

Adults who have not been fully vaccinated before, need to get the full basic vaccination.

# 7

**Yellow Fever** is a serious disease in certain subtropic regions of Africa and Latin-America, transmitted by mosquitoes (*Aedes* species) that bite during the day. The number of outbreaks is going up in these areas.

**Symptoms** : fever, muscular pain, headache, chills, lack of appetite, nausea...

**Alarm symptoms** : jaundice, abdominal pain, vomiting and bleeding!  
Yellow fever is a very deadly disease!

**Vaccination** against yellow fever is very effective and protects for 10 years with 1 injection.



The vaccination has to be carried out in an official vaccination centre at least 10 days before arrival in the infected area. You will need to have proof of this by way of an international vaccination certificate.

In some countries vaccination against yellow fever is mandatory, even for a transit stay. When arriving from an endemic country, even after such a transit stay, some countries still demand a valid vaccination.

**Typhoid fever** is caused by *Salmonella typhi* and transmitted by contaminated food and water.

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**Symptoms :** fever, headache, chills, lack of appetite, malaise and sleeping problems

**Alarm symptoms :** sustained fever, slow pulse, enlarged liver and spleen!

**Vaccination** against typhoid fever can be done with 2 types of vaccines : oral, to be taken in 3 doses with a 48 hour interval between each or by injection : 1 dose. Both vaccines are valid for 3 years.

Protection is never 100 % guaranteed so it remains important to handle food carefully and hygienically.

See also "Food safety, you are part of it..." by SHIP, [www.seafarershealth.org](http://www.seafarershealth.org)



# 9

**Influenza** : airborne transmitted viral infection often encountered in enclosed and crowded places by direct contact with droplets from unprotected coughs.

**Symptoms** : fever, sore throat, cough and chills, headache, muscle pain and running nose

In temperate regions influenza is a seasonal disease, occurring in winter. In the northern hemisphere this is from November to March and in the southern hemisphere from April to September. In tropical areas there is no seasonal pattern.

**Vaccination** is recommended before every influenza season, although this could be difficult where trips are to the opposite hemisphere.

Therefore it is wise to avoid crowded, enclosed spaces and close contact with infected persons.

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**Measles, mumps and rubella : 3 diseases**  
that can be prevented by vaccination.

For those who have never been vaccinated against measles it is wise to have a vaccination before going to developing countries for long periods.



**11** **Chicken-pox :** a viral disease (varicella)  
common in Europe and America.

**Symptoms :** fever, malaise, blisters covering the whole body (also in the mouth and hair), itchiness, cough.

Chicken-pox is a serious disease for adults and Asian seafarers are at risk when coming to Western countries.

For those who have never been in contact with this virus it is wise to have a vaccination before boarding vessels going to Europe or America.

**Hygiene and Food :** pay special attention to the quality of water onboard, if necessary use bottled water for drinking and brushing teeth, or boil water before consumption.

If you eat on land :

- Drink water from unopened bottles only
- Preferably take drinks made with boiled water such as tea and coffee
- Avoid using ice cubes
- Avoid:
  - Raw vegetables
  - Fresh milk, ice-cream
  - Raw or uncooked fish and shellfish
  - Raw meat
  - Fruit that you did not peel yourself

See also “Food safety, you are part of it...”  
by SHIP, [www.seafarershealth.org](http://www.seafarershealth.org)

These measures are important  
in preventing diarrhoea, cholera,  
typhoid fever, hepatitis, poliomyelitis  
and worm infections...



# Personal security

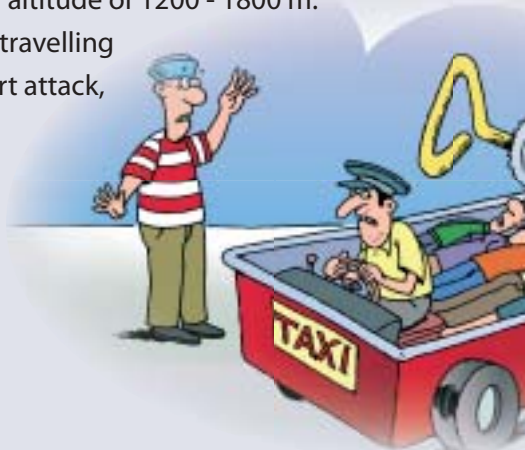
- Dress inconspicuously
- Leave expensive jewellery and watches on board
- Drink alcohol in moderation
- Do not allow people to see how much money you have with you
- Avoid travelling at night or on your own
- Beware of local transport
  - When using a car, check for seatbelts, good tyres and brakes
  - Hire a large vehicle if possible
  - Avoid overcrowded public transport
  - Avoid riding on motorcycles



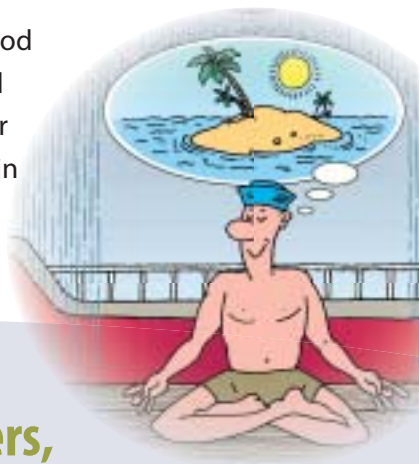
## Do not drink alcohol when driving

# Travelling by aeroplane

Many seafarers board their ship in a foreign port travelling to that port by plane. Cabin pressure is similar to an altitude of 1200 - 1800 m. Medical advice should be taken before travelling by plane if you have recently had a heart attack, cardiac decompensation, lung disease, eye injury or recent surgery. During take-off and landing, clear your ears by closing your mouth and nose and trying to breathe out.



To avoid inflammation and/or formation of a blood clot in a vein, walk around from time to time and avoid alcohol. On long flights it may be useful for people with a blood vessel problem to use aspirin or other medication. Consult your doctor about this.



## **Avoid casual sexual encounters, which often occur under the influence of alcohol !**

Sexual contact without protection is dangerous ! Take and wear condoms! Check the quality and expiry dates of condoms and keep them in a cool, dark place.





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