



USCG TAC Plus Newsletter

Q1 2025



Health Spotlight: Sun Exposure & Dehydration

Two serious challenges facing seafarers heading into the warmer seasons are sun exposure and dehydration. This alert describes both, along with solutions and recommendations to avoid while working on and off the vessel.

Sun Exposure

Sun exposure even over a short period of time may cause significant damage to the skin. The best way to avoid this, and to decrease the risk of skin cancer and pre-cancer, is to utilize sunscreen as recommended by the Skin Cancer Foundation.



Daily use of sunscreens with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 45-50 is recommended as it reduces the chance of ultraviolet (UV) radiation getting through to your skin. This, along with the use of blocking clothing and hat coverings significantly reduces your skin from sun exposure.

Many medications can heighten your skin's vulnerability to sun damage, such as steroids, antifungals, antihistamines, antibiotics, retinoids (acne medications) and some antidepressants. Read medication labels and speak to your provider about possible risks. Familial history and genetics may also play a role in your risk factors.

Heat Exhaustion, Stroke & Dehydration

Prolonged sun and heat exposure can lead to dehydration, a condition caused by excessive fluid and electrolyte loss as the body sweats to cool itself.



Certain medications, including antihypertensives, diuretics, laxatives, chemotherapy drugs, antidepressants, lithium, and even caffeine (which can result in a net loss of water), can increase the risk of dehydration. Common signs of dehydration include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Thirst
- ✓ Less frequent urination or very dark urine
- ✓ Dried, flushed and red skin, especially in the face and hands
- ✓ Stomach cramps

Sunburn further exacerbates dehydration by impairing the skin's ability to sweat and retain fluids. Individuals working below deck on vessels, particularly in engine rooms, are at higher risk of dehydration due to limited fluid intake while working on post and frequent trips up and down the stairways. Heat stroke, a severe form of dehydration, can develop after prolonged fluid loss or intense physical exertion. It may cause confusion, loss of consciousness, dangerously low blood pressure, and, if untreated, acute kidney failure.



The recommended amount of water (fluid replacement) daily is 15.5 - 8 oz. cups or roughly a gallon (3.7 liters) for men, and 11.5 - 8 oz. cups (2.7 liters) for women.

