



USCG TAC Plus Newsletter

Q3 2025



Health Spotlight: Oral Health and Best Sleep Habits

This newsletter highlights the importance of maintaining oral health and good sleep habits while onboard.

Oral Health for Seafarers

Traditionally, seafarers have had limited access to dental care while onboard, especially during lengthy tours, making oral health maintenance a significant challenge. Dental issues can become costly, not only in terms of direct treatment expenses but also due to:

- Lost time from duty
- Poor or substandard care received abroad
- Emergency treatments and associated costs

Several contributing factors can increase the risk of dental disease among seafarers, including:

- Smoking
- Chewing tobacco
- Poor dietary habits
- Inadequate oral hygiene practices



Preventive Dental Care

The most effective plan is to focus on preventive care, which should include:

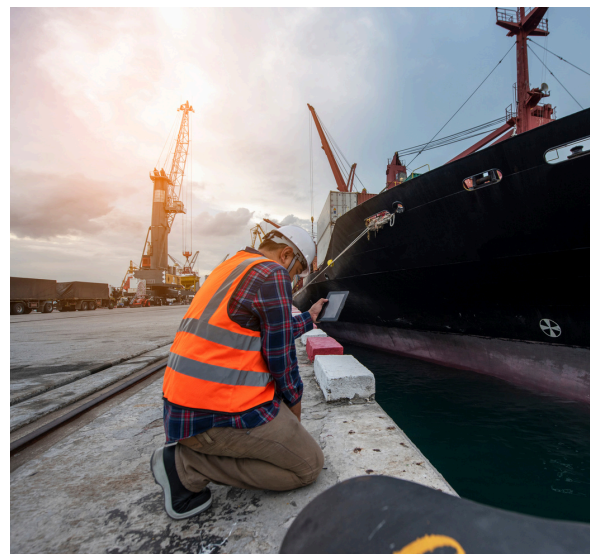
- ✓ Comprehensive dental check-ups at least twice a year
- ✓ Professional cleanings to remove plaque and tartar
- ✓ Education on proper brushing and flossing techniques
- ✓ Counseling on tobacco cessation
- ✓ Use of fluoride toothpaste and mouth rinses
- ✓ Prompt treatment of minor issues before they escalate



Best Sleep Habits for Seafarers

Sleep is one of the most important aspects of maintaining good physical and mental health. However, seafarers often face unique challenges that disrupt healthy sleep patterns, including irregular shifts, long working hours, and unbalanced circadian rhythms. These disruptions can lead to fatigue-related illnesses and significantly increase the risk of onboard injuries.

To help support rest and recovery, the following tools and habits are recommended:



Nutritional Support

Consider vitamins and supplements that promote sleep health, such as:

- Vitamin B Complex – supports brain function and can help reduce fatigue
- Vitamin D – regulates mood and immune function
- Vitamin C – helps reduce stress and fatigue

Always take supplements in recommended dosages and consult a medical professional before starting any regimen.

Optimize Your Sleep Environment

- Create a quiet, dark, and comfortable space for sleeping
- Use earplugs, noise-canceling headsets, or white noise machines/music to minimize disturbances in shared quarters
- Maintain consistent pre-sleep routines (e.g., washing up, dimming lights, stretching)
- Avoid stimulating substances before sleep such as nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, & large or heavy meals



Manage Physical Activity

Avoid strenuous workouts or high exertion close to bedtime. Elevated heart rate and adrenaline can delay the ability to fall asleep.

Reduce Exposure to Light and Electronics

Turn off technical lighting, screens, and devices at least 30–60 minutes before bedtime. Use blue-light filters on electronic devices if screen use is necessary.

Consider Natural Sleep Aids like Chamomile or Valerian root tea to help promote relaxation and rest. Over-the-counter supplements that may also support better sleep include:

- Melatonin
- Tryptophan
- Magnesium
- Over-the-counter sleep devices and aids- should be used with caution and under guidance if possible

Napping Strategy

Short naps (20–30 minutes) can help reduce sleep debt and prevent over tiredness. Avoid long naps close to bedtime, which can interfere with nighttime sleep quality.

