

THE IMPORTANCE OF HYDRATION

FOR SEAFARERS, THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING HYDRATION LEVELS CANNOT BE OVERSTATED. THE DEMANDING NATURE OF MARITIME WORK, OFTEN CONDUCTED IN CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENTS, MAKES IT ESSENTIAL FOR SEAFARERS TO STAY WELL-HYDRATED TO ENSURE THEIR SAFETY, WELLBEING AND OVERALL JOB PERFORMANCE.

Dehydration can lead to a range of problems, including fatigue, headaches, and decreased cognitive function, which can impact a seafarer's ability to perform their duties safely and effectively.

The recommended daily water intake for **adult males is 2.5 litres**, while **females should aim for 2 litres**. Most of this water should come from drinks, with the remaining **30-40% from food**. It is also important to note that water is the best type of fluid to drink. **These guidelines serve as a baseline, but individual requirements may vary based on factors such as age, body composition, climate, and physical activity.**

SEAFARERS CAN ADOPT SEVERAL BEST PRACTICES TO ENSURE ADEQUATE HYDRATION:

- Consistently drink water throughout the day, even if you do not feel thirsty. Thirst is often a delayed indicator of dehydration
- Sip water rather than drinking lots of water in one go, to avoid it passing straight through you
- In addition to water, include beverages with electrolytes to replenish salts lost through sweating
- Pay attention to the colour of your urine; pale yellow indicates good hydration, while dark yellow or amber signals dehydration
- Limit the consumption of alcoholic and caffeinated beverages, as they can contribute to dehydration
- Keep a reusable water bottle within reach to encourage regular water consumption.

The maritime work environment can significantly impact hydration levels. Extended periods of work, exposure to extreme temperatures, and physically demanding tasks can lead to increased fluid loss through sweating. Seafarers must be especially mindful of their hydration in these conditions and try to consume more fluids.

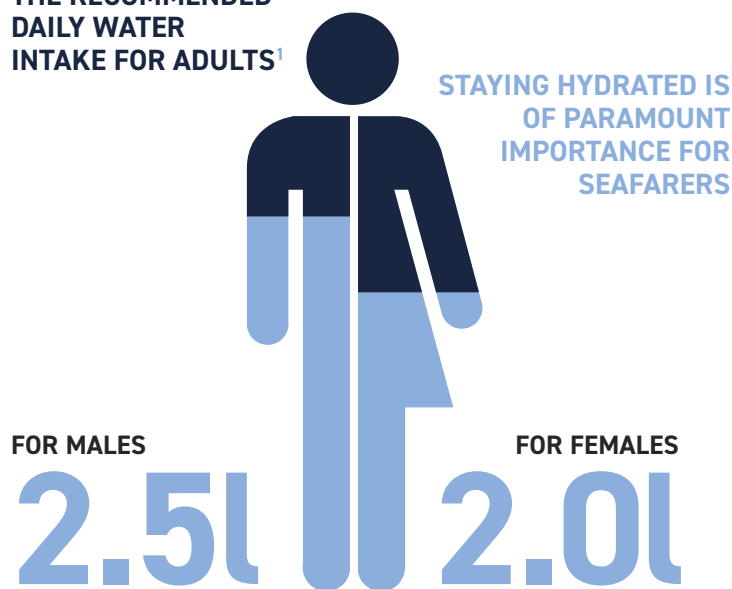
Working in warm climates or during the summer months requires extra attention to hydration. The body acclimatises to hot conditions over time, but during the adjustment period, seafarers are at a higher risk of heat-related illnesses and dehydration. Adequate rest, shade, and frequent hydration breaks are essential during this period to minimise the risks associated with excessive heat. Seafarers who are used to working in hot conditions tend to sweat more efficiently, while those who are not may lose more salt in their sweat. Adding a little extra salt in food can help, but salt tablets are not

recommended as they do not enter the body as quickly. Not drinking enough water can lead to kidney stones, which can be caused by a lack of water intake or excessive calcium in the diet. Foods high in calcium include beetroot, asparagus, soy products, and some nuts. It is important to maintain hydration levels to avoid these issues.

It is important to raise awareness around the significance of staying adequately hydrated; campaigns can help prevent these problems and improve crew members' overall wellbeing through education. The importance of having a crew with adequate knowledge on hydration can be shown in the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network's Quench Campaign whereby 16% of participants thought you could survive for a month without water. These participants consumed the least amount of water throughout the campaign, conversely, participants with the greatest knowledge on hydration, unsurprisingly, consistently consumed the most water.

Staying hydrated is of paramount importance for seafarers. Adequate water intake, adherence to guidelines, and adopting best practices are essential to ensure the well-being and performance of crew. The work environment, especially in warm conditions, can pose challenges to hydration, making it imperative to remain vigilant. By following these guidelines and staying informed through initiatives, seafarers can safeguard their health and safety while at sea.

THE RECOMMENDED DAILY WATER INTAKE FOR ADULTS¹



¹ European Food Information Council (EFIC)