



# dental care

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

Seafarers' Health Information Programme

Healthier, fitter, safer ...



Toothache may range from a distressing inconvenience to intense, miserable pain.

Toothache is difficult to treat with only the medication and instruments in the ship's medical chest.

Toothache may adversely affect your performance, upset your concentration and generally pose a real safety risk.

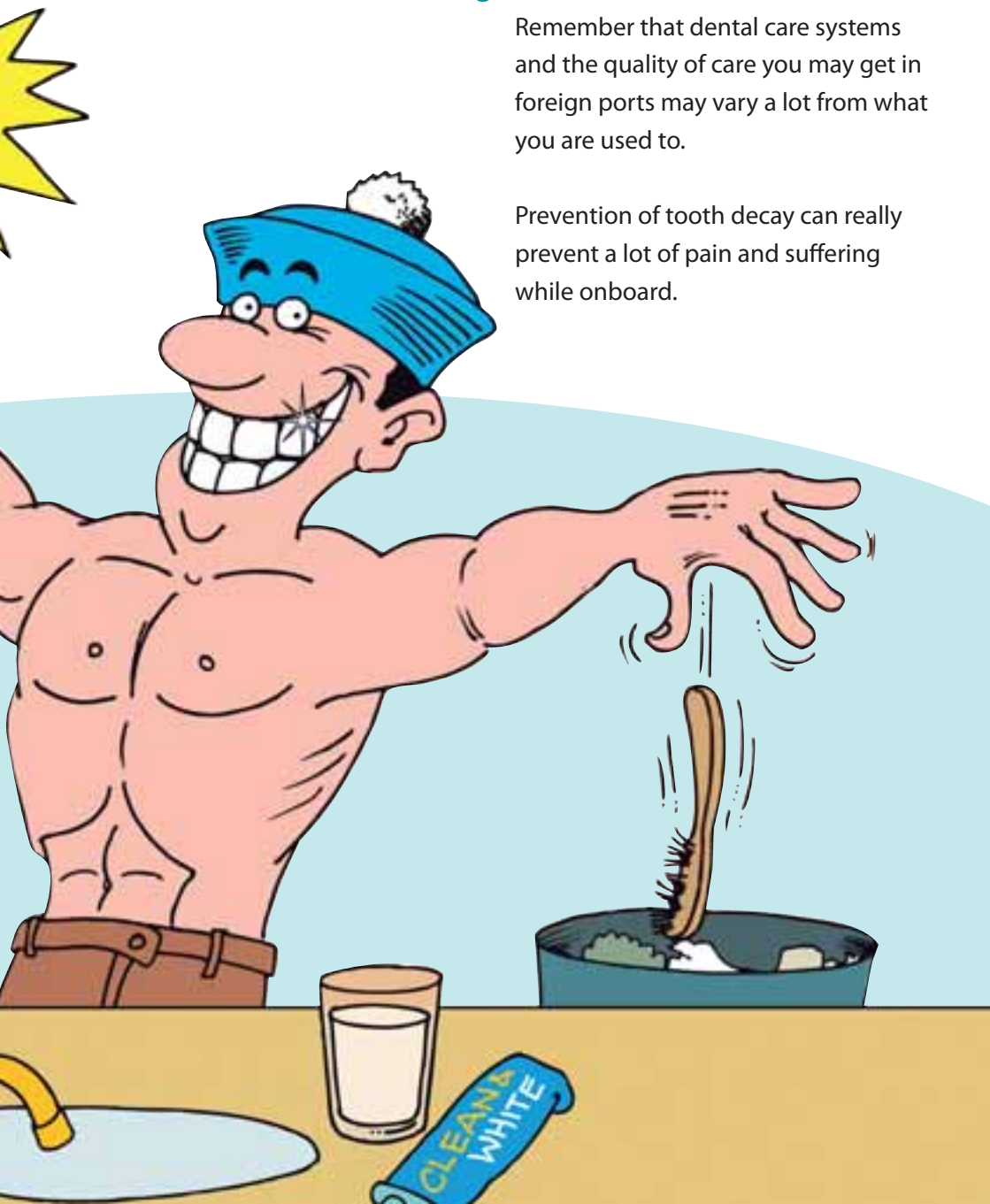
It is therefore extremely important to take good care of your teeth and have regular checkups at the dentist, especially before embarkation.



# Prevention is better than cure!

Remember that dental care systems and the quality of care you may get in foreign ports may vary a lot from what you are used to.

Prevention of tooth decay can really prevent a lot of pain and suffering while onboard.



Modern dentistry has succeeded in reducing the incidence of dental caries through water fluoridation, oral hygiene education, preventive dental care and advanced technology.

However, there is a greater risk of dental problems for seafarers because of the limited access to advanced dental care and regular control whilst at sea.

Some of the most frequent Dental Problems are:

**Tooth Decay (dental “caries”):** this is damage to the tooth’s structure, described as a “disease of civilization,” since man has strayed from a diet rich in fruit and vegetables to one with a high intake of refined sugars.

**Gum Disease** is an inflammation of the gums that can progress to affect the bone that surrounds and supports your teeth. This can cause teeth become loose, fall out or have to be removed by a dentist.

**Root Canal Problems** occur when the tooth’s pulp, a small, thread-like tissue in the centre of the tooth is damaged or diseased. If left untreated, pus can build up at the root tip in the jawbone, forming an **abscess**.

With the limited facilities for care onboard, prevention is vital!



# Proper brushing should take two minutes, **no more!**

A PROPER  
BRUSH  
TAKES  
2 MINUTES



But most seafarers (and other people) do not brush for nearly that long!

To brush your teeth properly:

- use short, gentle strokes
- pay extra attention to the gumline, hard-to-reach back teeth, and areas around fillings, crowns or other restoration work
- concentrate on thoroughly cleaning each section as follows:
  - first the outer surfaces of your upper teeth, then your lower teeth
  - then the inner surfaces of your upper teeth, followed by your lower teeth
  - finally clean the chewing surfaces
  - for fresher breath, be sure to brush your tongue, too



Gently brush the outside, inside and chewing surface of each tooth using short back-and-forth strokes.



Gently brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen breath.

## Toothbrush

A soft-bristled brush is best for removing plaque and debris from your teeth. Small-headed brushes can reach all areas of the mouth better.

A powered toothbrush can do a better job of cleaning teeth. Replace your toothbrush when it begins to show wear, or at least every three months. It is also very important to change toothbrushes after you've had a cold, since the bristles can collect germs.

## Toothpaste

Use a toothpaste that's right for you. There is a wide variety of toothpastes for many conditions: cavities, gingivitis, tartar, stained teeth and sensitivity. A small quantity of Fluoride in the saliva can prevent tooth decay, so brush your teeth three times a day with a toothpaste containing Fluoride. Too much Fluor can cause white spots and stripes on the teeth, so don't take Fluoride drops or tablets without consulting a dentist first!

# Emergency Toothache !

If you lose a filling or find a hole or crack in the enamel (surface of the tooth), apply oil of cloves to the tooth surface.

If there is a large hole or crack in the tooth, put a temporary dressing into the cavity as follows:

- first isolate the tooth by putting a 5X5 cm piece of gauze on each side of it
- use a cotton bud or pellet to dry the cavity
- place a drop of oil of cloves on cotton wool, then gently press the cotton wool into the cavity and leave it in place
- Finally, remove the isolating gauze

Repeat this procedure two to three times a day as necessary

Take pain relievers such as paracetamol 1000 mg orally

Rinse out your mouth with warm salty water for five minutes every waking hour, until you can see a dentist

If you think you have an infection or abscess forming, antibiotics may be needed so consult your doctor or dentist as soon as possible

Seek medical advice urgently if you experience:

- difficulty opening the mouth
- difficulty swallowing
- drooling
- difficulty breathing
- swelling in the neck
- pain much beyond the area of the infected tooth

After a blow to the face or jaw, emergency dental care may save teeth

Should a tooth be knocked out:

- handle it only by the crown
- rinse it with tap water
- do not scrub it
- attempt to place it back in its socket
- keep it in place with a finger or by biting it
- if unsuccessful, place it in milk or water
- seek medical advice and dental care!





# dry Mouth

Dry mouth all or most of the time, can be uncomfortable and can lead to further health problems or indicate that a more serious medical condition may exist.

Symptoms of dry mouth include:

- a sticky, dry feeling in your mouth
- trouble swallowing
- a burning sensation on your tongue
- a dry feeling in your throat
- cracked lips
- reduced ability to taste things or a metallic taste in your mouth
- mouth sores
- frequent bad breath
- difficulty chewing/speaking

Reasons why the glands that produce saliva, (called the salivary glands), might not function properly, include:

- side effects of some medicines
- disease such as diabetes, Hodgkin's, Parkinson's disease, HIV / AIDS and Sjogren's syndrome
- the menopause
- smoking

The only permanent way to cure dry mouth is to treat its cause.

In addition, you can :

- take frequent sips of water or sugarless drinks
- avoid drinks with caffeine, such as coffee, tea and some sodas
- chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless hard candy to stimulate saliva flow
- don't use tobacco or alcohol, which dry out the mouth
- be aware that spicy or salty foods can cause pain in a dry mouth
- use a humidifier at night

# Bad Breath

Bad breath may be caused by certain diets, inadequate oral hygiene, stomach or intestinal problems, or disorders such as diabetes.

Poor oral hygiene, advanced tooth decay or periodontal disease may also result in bad breath.

For many, bad breath is caused by bacteria which collect in the ridges of the tongue.

so try using a small plastic rake (tongue scraper) after cleaning your teeth.

A germicidal mouth rinse, containing chlorine dioxide, may also be helpful.

If you would like to have more information on Dental



# Where to Find advice ?

Care and are not able to consult your dentist or doctor, you can contact SeafarerHelp, a free and confidential service provided by the International Seafarers Assistance Network (ISAN)

SeafarerHelp is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, in more than 20 languages including Russian, Philipino, Polish, Hindi and French. You can reach SeafarerHelp by telephone, Email, Fax or SMS. As well as being there for information about Health, SeafarerHelp exists to help you with any issues or problems you may want to discuss, about anything from working conditions to family problems. Their trained helpline staff will be able to put you in touch with the agency which is most likely to be able to help you.

Whatever the problem, ring SEAFARER free on **(+) 800 73232737**

For countries where there is no freephone:  
Call collect on +44 (0)20 SEAFARER.  
Alternatively ask us to call you straight back.

Contact SeafarerHelp  
by text / SMS:

Text number:  
**+44 (0)762 481 8405**

Email SeafarerHelp:  
**info@seafarerhelp.org**  
**listen@seafarerhelp.org**





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