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# HEALTH CARE FOR CRUISING

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The Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club  
Newport NSW

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**S**kippers have the responsibility for on-board medical risk planning and management. They must ensure that the skills and training to deal with medical emergencies and other medical conditions are adequate and that the equipment is appropriate. Crew have a duty to inform the skipper of health issues which might affect their capabilities. And, all crew must be able to seek external assistance via whatever telecommunication means available. Make sure you have at least one but preferably more, trained First Aiders. This training teaches you what to do first, basically within the first 30 minutes.

*Skippers have the responsibility for on-board medical risk planning and management.*

**W**hen things go wrong they might be simply managed with supplies you have brought on board or in extreme cases they may be so serious that a medical evacuation may be best. Train yourself to think in terms of medical risk assessment or triage. If you think things are serious always call someone for advice, if you are truly alarmed make urgent contact, and, if there is doubt, contact someone.

*If you think things are serious always call for advice.*

**H**ow do you make contact in emergencies? If you need urgent medical advice during the cruise call the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

If you are worried about the health of a crew member plus you are troubled by the state of the sea, the weather and multiple seamanship challenges, then contact the VMR who can give practical advice and support and also access doctors. In a serious emergency the VMR can arrange an ambulance for when you arrive or possibly a medical evacuation. You could also contact 000 for ambulance services.

*If you need urgent medical advice during the cruise, call the Royal Flying Doctor Service.*

**M**any minor and major medical emergencies can be prevented. Because we are at sea and don't have easy access to GPs, Emergency Departments or ambulances you must do everything possible to prevent medical illnesses and injuries. Focus on prevention.

On the ocean, one way to prevent serious emergencies is to "nip it in the bud". This means we should take early action to prevent health issues deteriorating. "Wait and see" is not the best advice on the ocean, miles and hours from help.

You should refer to the Health Care for Cruising Guide or your own marine healthcare books whenever you are in doubt and act early. Do not ignore important symptoms like chest pain, blurred vision, weakness, deteriorating asthma, bleeding, pain or fevers.

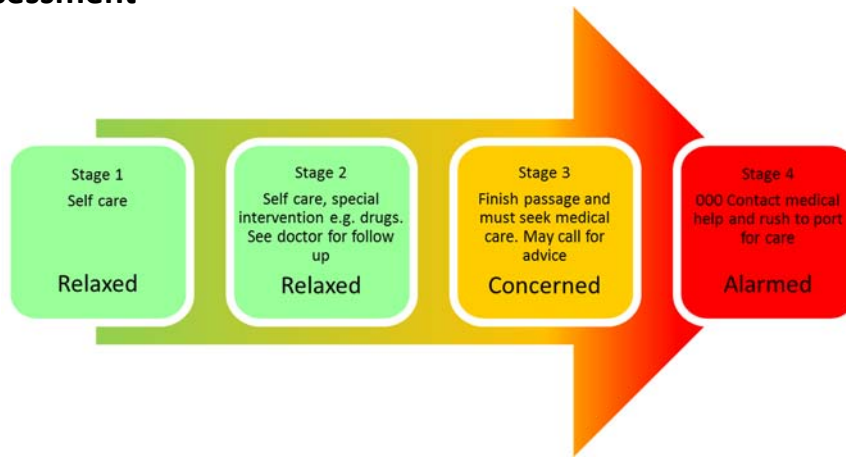
*Do not ignore important symptoms like chest pain, blurred vision, weakness, deteriorating asthma, bleeding, pain or fevers.*

**P**ack yourselves a comprehensive medical kit. Take plenty of dressings, bandages, splints, antibiotics, pain killers, seasickness pills, eye drops, antifungal creams etc. Remember the basics like sunscreen, barrier creams, stinger suits, good footwear in an out of the water, gloves, sunglasses etc.

Medical risk planning also requires that all crew to be prepared for this cruise which involves:

1. Having a GP check up and getting vaccinated
2. Having blood and other specialised diagnostic check-ups before you leave.
3. Knowing your illnesses
4. Understanding how your medications work, what dosage is correct and ensuring an adequate supply of these drugs.
5. Getting fit

## Triage / Risk Assessment



### Some examples of illness to **concern** you

- Unwell with vomiting or diarrhoea for 24 hours
- Visual disturbances, not migraine
- Severe rash
- Cut/laceration from dirty source or needing stitching
- Sever flue like symptoms
- Fever > 38 °C
- Eye, ear infections or pain
- Continued breathing difficulties from asthma / bronchitis
- Past history and current history of serious illness

### Some examples of illness to **alarm** you

- Chest pain lasting more than 5 minutes
- Breathing difficulty and having difficulty talking
- Collapse or altered consciousness
- Facial or limb weakness
- Bleeding which is or has been hard to control
- Spinal or head injury
- Unable to urinate
- Eye injury
- Severe pain

## Communicating

Ask for help whenever you want advice and especially when you are **concerned** or **alarmed**

Ask early, don't be shy

To speak with a Doctor in an emergency, contact the Royal Flying Doctor Service via mobile:

- In NSW waters, phone RFDS Broken Hill base on **08 8088 1188**
- In QLD waters, phone RFDS Cairns base on **07 4040 0500**
- If outside mobile phone range contact closest Marine Rescue station via VHF and request a relay

Contact Marine Rescue via VHF or telephone to arrange ambulance or other help

Or telephone **000**, ask for ambulance and provide Lat/Long position and closest coastal town

Prepare for the call, write notes using the RFDS body chart below

You may need to call a Pan Pan or let off red or orange flares

Body chart reproduced courtesy of

