



# First Aid for Onboard Medical Emergencies

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# This presentation

is on-line in both PowerPoint and PDF formats at

[swq.com/firstaid](http://swq.com/firstaid)

# What we'll review

- First aid principles
- Preparation for your cruise
- Calling for help
- Examples of medical emergencies



# First Aid Principles

# First Aid Afloat

At the heart of marine medicine is improvisation. One must utilize whatever supplies or materials are on hand, and depend heavily on common sense.

from *Marine Medicine, a Comprehensive Guide*\*



# First Aid Afloat

- Locate (*where is your boat?*)
- Access (*how will rescuers get to you?*)
- Assess (*what is the medical problem?*)
- Stabilize (*until medically trained personnel arrive*)
- Transport (*to an appropriate medical facility*)



# First Aid: initial examination

- Is the patient alive? Verify
  - Airway
  - Breathing
  - Circulation
- Determine Primary Problem
- Determine Seriousness
- Look for any additional problems!



# Preparation For Your Cruise



# Preparation for your cruise

- Where are you cruising?
- What are you likely to encounter?
- What will you need in the way of equipment?
- How easily can you obtain additional supplies?
- How can you obtain help in an emergency?



# Preparation: vessel safety

- PFDs
- Status of lifelines, bow and stern pulpits, grabrails
- Man overboard equipment
- Vessel Safety Check



# Preparation: have on board

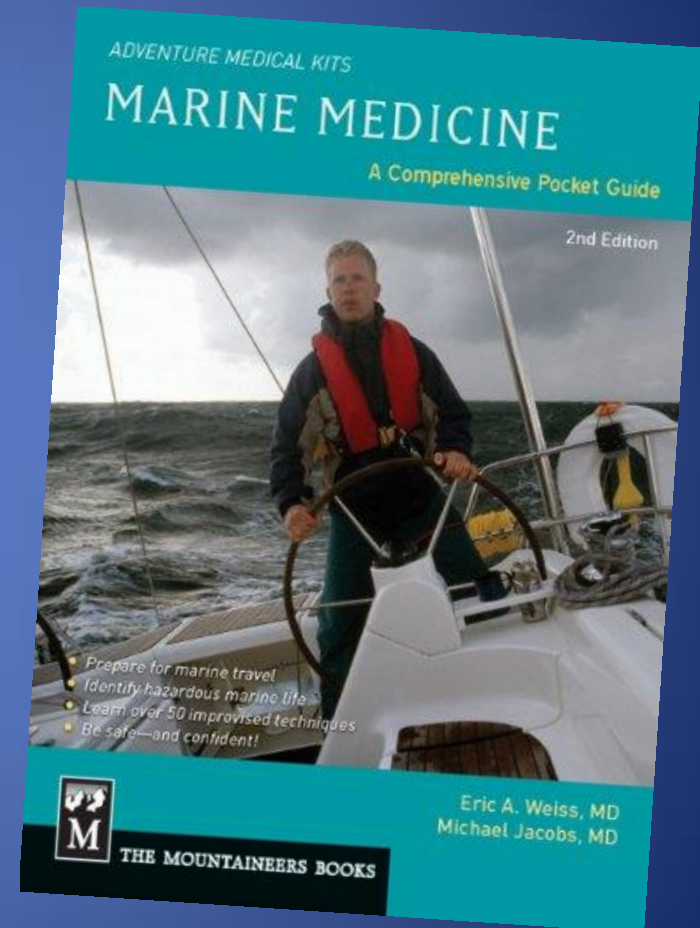
- Your medications
- First aid kit or medicine chest\* (*make sure it's well marked and easily found on vessel*)
- Aspirin (*for sudden chest pain*)
- "Traveling Medical Record"\*
- Appropriate clothing including footwear



# Preparation: first aid books

Read in advance!

- *Marine Medicine*  
*A Comprehensive Guide*  
*(2012 edition)\**
- *The Ship Captain's Medical Guide\** (15 PDFs you can download)



Calling For Help

# Calling for help

- Mayday or Pan-Pan
- VHF or SSB (*You want everyone around to listen in. When the Coast Guard asks you to switch to channel 22, others will switch too*)
- Digital Selective Calling distress alert and channel 16
- Cell phone: might use **at the dock**
- Leave “how to get help” laminated instructions at the helm, should your guests need to get help for YOU!

# Calling for help: vessel info:

- Vessel's name and call sign.
- Vessel's position.
- Vessel's course, speed, next port of call and estimated time of arrival.
- Medical supplies carried aboard the vessel.
- On scene weather.
- Communications schedule and frequency.

*From Emergency Procedures, 1st Coast Guard District, 2001\**

# Calling for help: patient info:

- Patient's name, nationality, age, and sex.
- Patient's respiration, pulse, temperature, BP.
- Patient's symptoms & nature of illness/injury.
- Any known history of similar illness/es.
- Location and type of pain.
- Medication given to patient.

*From Emergency Procedures, 1st Coast Guard District, 2001\**



# Examples of Medical Emergencies

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- Heart Attack
- Stroke
- Seizure
- Allergic Reaction
- Diabetes
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Heat-related illness
- Cold-related illness
- Fractures
- Wounds
- Bleeding
- Head/neck injury
- Sprains/strains
- Burns
- Bites and stings
- Drowning/near

# Heart Attack

- Symptoms: chest pain, shortness of breath, nausea, pain radiating to arms or jaw, sense of impending doom, ashen skin, weak or irregular pulse, sweating, faint or dizzy, collapse.
- Symptoms may be different in women & also in people with diabetes
- Have aspirin available (ask if allergic to aspirin or if contraindicated?) Chew 1 non-coated 325 mg tablet
- Does the victim have/use nitroglycerin? If yes, give dose.
- Encourage victim to rest
- *If the victim becomes unconscious, get advanced help immediately. Be prepared to give CPR if needed.*

# Stroke (CVA)

- Symptoms: Problems with speech or swallowing, one-sided weakness or loss of movement in limbs, headache, confusion or loss of consciousness
- Maintain open airway, no food or drink, arrange transport ASAP
- *Clot-busting treatment for some types of stroke must be given within hours*
- CT scan in ER will be needed

# Seizure

- Symptoms: jerking movements, loss of consciousness, rigidity, post-seizure confusion
- Protect the head, ease the fall, do not restrain. No tongue blades! Keep the airway open: place onto side
- *Medical help if new seizure, unconscious >10 minutes, or several seizures*
- Possible causes of new seizure: head injury, low blood sugar, other causes.

# Head injury

- *All head injuries are potentially serious*
- Watch for: deteriorating consciousness, difficulty breathing, unequal pupil size, seizures, clear fluid or watery blood from the nose or ear, vomiting, worsening headache
- control external bleeding and have victim lie down
- *Obtain medical attention ASAP, esp if victim is unconscious or has had brief period of unconsciousness with return to consciousness*

# Neck injury

- Assume that anyone with a head injury also has a neck injury
- look for pain, loss of movement or sensation
- support victim's neck (don't alter neck position if distorted)
- Immobilization if possible
- *Obtain medical attention ASAP*

# Concluding Thoughts



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- Plan ahead
- Know your skills and bring supplies for what you can treat
- Ask your physician about necessary medications and supplies
- Consider coursework and books
- For distant travel: read CDC information\*; consider evacuation insurance

*From First Aid: Personalizing your approach to medical emergencies and more minor medical problems \**

Thank you!

