

# Fatigue Self Help Manual

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## How to use this manual

This manual is intended to help you find strategies that you can use to help you avoid fatigue while you are on board ship. By the end of this manual, you will be able to write your own Fatigue Self Help Plan. You can use this plan to try to reduce the amount of fatigue you feel during your next voyage.

In order to make the most of this manual, go through the following stages:

In this manual:

1. Read the 'Introduction on Fatigue (page 2).
2. Make some notes on 'Your regular habits' (page 3).
3. Read the section on 'How to manage your fatigue' (page 5).
4. Use the check boxes in 'How to manage your fatigue' (page 5 & 6) to note whether you already use these management strategies, or whether you plan to do them.
5. Compare your regular habits with the fatigue management strategies, and choose 3 key strategies to add to your 'Fatigue Self Help Plan' (page 7).

On board ship:

6. Discuss your Fatigue Self Help Plan with your senior officer, and both sign the agreement.
7. Keep and refer to your Fatigue Self Help Plan during your next period on board ship.
8. Try your best to follow your plan and consider whether this makes an improvement of your level of fatigue during your voyage.

## Introduction on Fatigue

Fatigue is generally described as a state of feeling tired, weary, or sleepy that results from prolonged mental or physical work, extended periods of anxiety, exposure to harsh environments, or loss of sleep. Signs that you are suffering from fatigue include:

- Inability to concentrate
- Diminished decision-making ability
- Poor memory
- Slow response
- Loss of control of bodily movements
- Mood change
- Attitude change
- Illness symptoms such as headaches, dizziness or sweating

Fatigue is dangerous because it can stop you from carrying out your duties effectively and safely. Fatigue can create risks of mistakes or accidents in the workplace. In the maritime industry, fatigue is a real danger because mariners often work long days with irregular sleep patterns, or simply do not get enough sleep. Fatigue has a large impact in the Maritime industry because it can lead to accidents. For example, if a fatigued officer falls asleep on watch and this leads to a collision or grounding of the ship.

Chronic fatigue is also a known risk factor regarding our health, particularly metabolic and cardiovascular health.

The shipping industry, and shipping companies can try to prevent fatigue through watch and rest schedules designed to give mariners the best opportunities to get enough rest and sleep. However, this Fatigue Self Help Guide deals with fatigue management that can be done by you, the mariner. That is why at the end of this manual, you are asked to complete a Fatigue Self Help Plan.

The UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency says, 'Fatigue Management Plans are proven to work. Evidence from a range of industries underpins this statement. Organisations which manage fatigue effectively are shown to experience significantly reduced levels of accidents, injuries and staff turnover.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maritime & Coastguard Agency. 2014. Marine Guidance Note 505 (N)

## Your regular habits<sup>2</sup>

Make notes below on your regular daily habits while you are on board ship.

### Sleep

How much sleep do you regularly get each day? What is your usual sleep pattern? (1 sleep period, more than 1, naps?) Does that pattern often change?

Do you find it easy or difficult to get to sleep? (✓)    Easy     Difficult

How well do you sleep? (✓)                      Well     OK     Badly

If you find it difficult to get to sleep, or you sleep badly, why do you think that is?

### Eating and Drinking

Describe your usual eating and drinking habits during a typical day. Think about your regular meals, your snacks, your drinking of water, coffee or tea and alcohol.

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<sup>2</sup> This page is based on the topics covered in the Section 7 of the MARTHA questionnaire

### **Rest and recreation**

What do you do in your non-working hours while on board ship? How do you relax? Do you get any exercise? Describe your rest and recreation activities here.

### **Fatigue**

Write some notes below on how much and how regularly you feel fatigue, and whether you think this has any impact on your ability to carry out your duties safely.

If you suffer from fatigue on board, what do you think are the main causes of it?

## How to manage your fatigue

Below are a number of strategies that are known to help reduce the risk of fatigue. Read through the strategies and check of (✓) if these are things you do already, or if these are things that you plan to start doing.

Note that some strategies will be appropriate or helpful for you, while others may not seem as useful. While you read, consider ‘Your Regular Habits’ (page 3) and decide which strategies you can plan to start to help manage your fatigue.

### Eat

	I already do this (✓)	I plan to start (✓)
I eat a well-balanced diet that includes, fruit, vegetables, carbohydrates and protein.		
I eat my meals at regular times each day.		
I avoid eating too many sugary foods, especially near the times when I plan to sleep.		
I drink at least 1.5 litres of water during the day.		
I avoid drinking close to the time when I plan to sleep.		
I avoid drinking too much caffeine during the day.		
I avoid drinking caffeine near the times when I plan to sleep.		
I avoid drinking too much alcohol near the times when I plan to sleep.		

### Rest

	I already do this (✓)	I plan to start (✓)
I do relaxing activities near the times when I plan to sleep (such as reading or listening to quiet music).		
I avoid doing stimulating activities (such as playing video games) near times when I plan to sleep.		

### Exercise

	I already do this (✓)	I plan to start (✓)
I get at least 30 minutes of physical exercise each day.		
I exercise after I have slept and before I go on duty.		
I avoid doing too much energetic exercise near the times when I plan to sleep.		

## Sleep

	I already do this (✓)	I plan to start (✓)
I plan my sleep times and make sure I try to sleep at all of these times.		
I take short naps during my non-working hours.		
I get between 7-8 hours of sleep per 24 hours (main sleep + naps).		
I use an eye mask to block out light when I want to sleep.		
I use earplugs to block out noise when I want to sleep.		
I use breathing exercises and/or meditation to help me relax into sleep.		

## Working hours

	I already do this (✓)	I plan to start (✓)
I drink moderate amounts of caffeine to keep me alert.		
I stretch, walk, or do other simple exercise to help me stay alert.		
I eat small, healthy snacks.		

## Fatigue Self Help Plan

In order to try to manage my fatigue while on board ship, I have set myself the three following strategies to follow during my current voyage:

1.

2.

3.

## Agreement

I (mariner) agree to do my best to follow the Fatigue Self Help Plan I have written above.

Mariner: \_\_\_\_\_ (signed)

I (senior officer) will do my best to support and review this mariner's Fatigue Self Help Plan.

Senior officer: \_\_\_\_\_ (signed)