

North Shore Yacht Club
Medical Emergencies at Sea 101
March 2, 2011

- Basics: Assess the urgency of the situation
 - A – airway
 - B – breathing
 - C – circulation(don't be distracted by “dramatic” findings)
- Use the best tools at hand: cell phone, VHF
- An ounce of prevention ... (holds triply true on a boat!)
- Be appropriately prepared for the environment (i.e. Manhasset Bay versus Newport-Bermuda)
- Visit a travel doc if you're going somewhere exotic
- Know your guests' medical issues!
- Educate your guests about basic emergency procedures

Common Boating Emergencies

1. Skin

a. Cuts & scrapes

- i. Prevent with gloves, booties, wetsuits, etc.
- ii. EDUCATE guests about winches, pinchpoints, windlass, engine, stove
- iii. Stop bleeding with direct pressure (not tourniquets)
- iv. Cleanse with water, remove foreign bodies if possible
- v. Apply dressing and get to a doctor
- vi. Small cuts far from home can be closed with super glue; dirty cuts should be left open

b. Infection

- i. Takes a while to set in
- ii. Warm soaks for minor infections
- iii. Antibiotics for real infections
- iv. If pus present, let it drain

c. Burns

- i. Prevent with sunscreen, hats, shirts! Even when snorkeling
- ii. Cook carefully. Treat tea, coffee with great respect!
- iii. If burnt, apply cool water until area cooled down
- iv. If blisters or non-intact skin, apply antibiotic ointment & dressing

2. Fractures

- a. Big problem on a boat!
- b. Legs: gently straighten limb, and immobilize with splint
- c. Arms: sling usually OK

3. Intestines

a. Seasickness

- i. Avoid fatty, greasy foods & large portions
- ii. Identify what works for you BEFORE your trip
- iii. Medications vs devices vs natural remedies (ginger)
- iv. Take the helm

b. Dehydration (from vomiting or diarrhea)

- i. Drink lots of water, soda, tea, coffee, anything!
- ii. Take antibiotics for traveler's diarrhea (1 dose of Cipro, Levaquin)

4. Exposure/Immersion

a. Hypothermia is very common, even on deck

- i. Symptoms: irritability, memory loss, unresponsive
- ii. Occurs very quickly in warm or cool water; get the man overboard back on board ASAP!
- iii. Warm with blankets, another body, heater if available, hot drinks if conscious

b. Drowning

- i. ABCs: airway, breathing, circulation
- ii. Learn CPR before you need it (frequent courses nearby, e.g. St. Francis Hospital)
- iii. Dial 911, then 2 breaths/30 compressions (@ 100 per min), repeat

5. Head Injury (i.e. head vs boom)

- a. Avoid sailing straight downwind!
- b. Assess consciousness; ABCs if needed
- c. Mild: confusion, memory loss, headache, nausea or vomiting, blurred vision, slurred speech and balance problems
- d. Monitor for change in status

Dan's Bare-Minimum Medical Kit

1. Drugs

- a. Ibuprofen (and plenty of it!) – safer and more effective than acetaminophen
- b. Dramamine/Bonine/Meclizine
- c. Antibiotic: levaquin or cipro (may be over-the-counter in foreign lands)
- d. Antibiotic cream/ointment: mupirocin (Bactroban)
- e. Anti-diarrheal: Pepto-bismol, immodium (if absolutely necessary)

2. Goodies

- a. Tape
- b. Superglue
- c. Gauze (4x4, 2x2)
- d. Ace wrap
- e. Band-aids

3. Tools

- a. Swiss army knife with scissors
- b. Tweezers