

'Twas the scourge o' the seven seas. It sent thousands to Davy Jones' locker!

What was this terror? Was it Blackbeard? That old sea dog? Was it the dead calm? That could drive men mad!

Nay. 'Twas scurvy!

Scurvy isn't pretty. Your gums bleed. You lose your teeth. Your body can't heal. Your toes can rot.

It was the 15th century. Long trips at sea were new. Long trips brought scurvy. Sailors got sick at eight weeks. They started to die at 12 weeks. Scurvy killed more sailors than anything else.

Captains tried everything. British explorer James Cook tried sauerkraut in 1768. He ordered thousands of pounds of it.

The problem? The men wouldn't eat it. So Cook got tricky. He served it to his officers. That made it seem special. Fancy. The crew asked for it that week. Cook's men had low rates of scurvy.

British Navy doctor James Lind found something better. Lind took six pairs of sailors with scurvy. He tried something different with each pair. Five pairs stayed sick. One pair got better. The pair that got better had eaten two oranges and a lemon every day. Lind had found a cure: fresh fruit!

It took years for the British Navy to put Lind's ideas into action. British sailors finally started getting daily lime juice in 1795. Australians and Americans called them "Limeys." They thought that was funny. Limeys laughed all the way to a long life. With all their toes. And all their own teeth.

The cause of scurvy was found in the 20th century. The true scourge o' the seven seas? Too little vitamin C.



1 Fill in the blank to complete the sentence.

For many years, a disease called scurvy made _____ sick on long trips.

sailors doctors dogs

2 What happens to someone who gets sick with scurvy? Choose two.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Their gums bleed | ☐ Their muscles get stiff |
| ☐ They have difficulty breathing | ☐ Their teeth rot |

3 The text says that James Cook thought sauerkraut would cure scurvy. Why did Cook give sauerkraut to the ship's officers?

- A To celebrate a trip without any illnesses
- B To test if it would cure their scurvy
- C To make his sailors think it was a special treat
- D To keep them from catching scurvy from their sailors

4 Place the events in the order in which they occurred.

1	Select Item
2	Select Item
3	Select Item
4	Select Item

Scientists figured out that scurvy has to do with vitamin C

The British Navy made sailors drink lime juice every day British sailors were nicknamed "Limeys"

Dr. Lind saw that oranges and lemons cured scurvy

5 Fill in the blanks to complete the sentence.

According to the text, sailors can prevent scurvy by getting more _____. One way to do this is by changing what they _____.

sun vitamin C eat wear