

ESA trains space doctors!

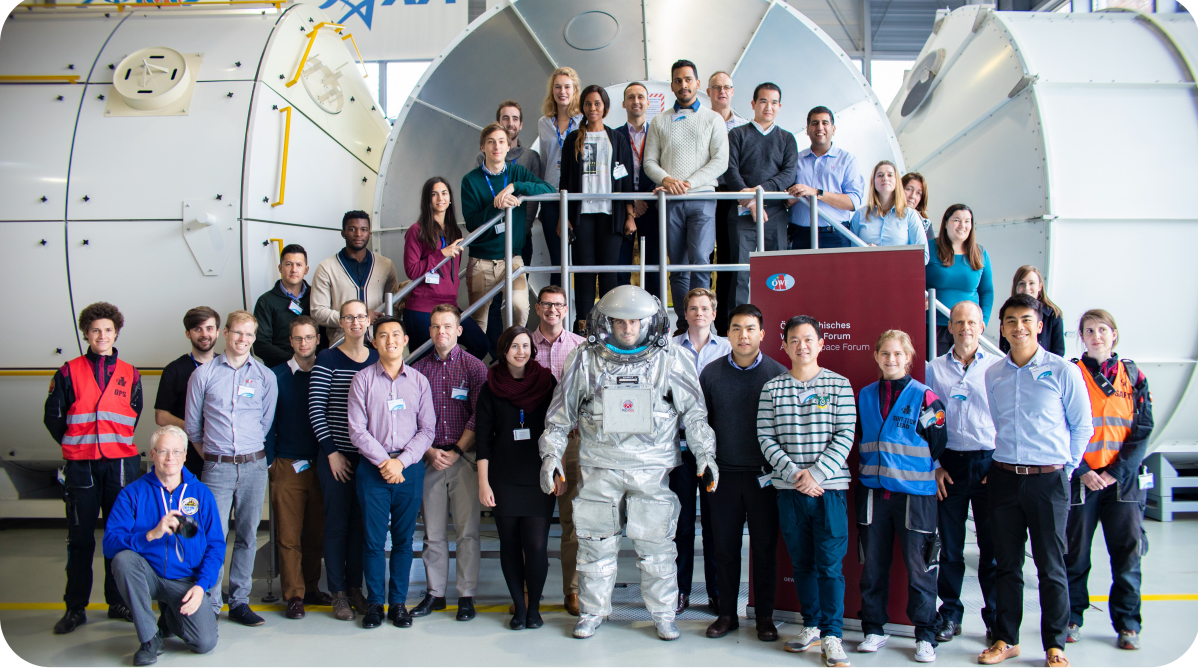


Staying healthy in space is hard work!
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Travelling into space is a huge challenge for astronauts. Being weightless affects the human body in many negative ways, such as causing muscles and bones to weaken. There is also an impact on the mind and wellbeing, as being isolated in space, so far from friends and family, is very difficult. Helping astronauts to overcome these issues are experts from ESA's Space Medicine Office.

Space Medicine teams include lots of specialists, such as psychologists, exercise professionals, and flight surgeons – doctors who help people like pilots and astronauts. Before a mission, a flight surgeon and physiologist examine astronauts to check that they are fit enough to go into space. The teams of space doctors stay on Earth during a mission, but remain in constant contact with the astronauts in space, checking on their health. At the end of a mission, the flight surgeon helps the crew with their landings. Then begins the process of getting the astronauts' health back up to pre-mission levels!



Team photo for the 2018 Space Physicians Training Course!
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These are very important jobs, so recently ESA held a special training course to help prepare future space medicine experts. Called the 2018 Space Physicians Training Course, it was attended by 21 doctors who were eager to learn more about space medicine. The training course was held at ESA's Astronaut Centre, known as the EAC, in Cologne, Germany. It was delivered by a team of current space doctors, including ESA flight surgeons. They shared their experiences of helping astronauts to stay healthy during missions to the International Space Station. Perhaps the most exciting part of the course was trying the Aouda.X prototype simulator spacesuit, which makes it seem as if you are on a real space mission! The doctors were challenged to wear the suit and complete tasks such as unscrewing a bolt in space.

The course finished with a question and answer session with ESA astronaut Tim Peake. He spoke about how spending a long time in space affects astronauts' minds as well as their bodies. Tim was asked whether he would like to go back into space. He said that he would!



The Aouda.X prototype simulator spacesuit in action.
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Would you like to be an ESA Space Medicine expert, helping astronauts to stay healthy?

Cool fact: Even though there is a whole team of specialists in Space Medicine at ESA, astronauts are given training in basic medical procedures in case they need to be performed in space.