

# Counselor Handbook

## First Aid and Health Information

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### **DEHYDRATION: HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND PREVENT ITS EFFECTS**

Our bodies require a certain amount of fluid intake on a daily basis to function; the minimum is about equal to four 8 ounce glasses (one liter or one quart). Requirements vary with activity and age, but most active persons need two to three times this basic amount. Basic fluid intake serves to replace the fluids which are required to perform our normal bodily functions. If we take in less, or lose more fluid than is needed, the end result is dehydration.

Symptoms may be difficult to distinguish from those of an illness, but in general, the following signs are suggestive of dehydration: weakness or lightheadedness (particularly if worsening on standing), increasing thirst, dry mouth, and a decrease in urination. Severe dehydration can lead to changes in the body's chemistry, kidney failure, and can even become life-threatening.

The best way to treat dehydration is to prevent it from occurring.

### **NOSEBLEED – HOW DO YOU STOP THE COMMON NOSEBLEED?**

Most people who develop nose bleeding can handle the problem if they follow the recommendations below:

- 1) Pinch all the soft parts of the nose together between your thumb and index finger.
- 2) Press firmly toward the face - compressing the pinched parts of the nose against the bones of the face.
- 3) Hold the nose for at least 5 minutes (timed by the clock). Repeat as necessary until the nose has stopped bleeding.
- 4) Sit quietly, keeping the head higher than the level of the heart; that is, sit up or lie with the head elevated. Do not lay flat or put your head between your legs.
- 5) Apply ice (crushed in a plastic bag or washcloth) to nose and cheeks.

### **THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST GERMS**

Campers may not always listen when you tell them to wash their hands before eating, but it's a message worth repeating. Hand washing is by far the best way to prevent germs from spreading and to keep your campers from getting sick.

Germs - such as bacteria and viruses - can be transmitted several different ways.

- 1) through contaminated water and food
- 2) through droplets released during a cough or a sneeze
- 3) through contaminated surfaces, especially touching another 's dirty hands
- 4) through a sick person's body fluids

If campers pick up germs from one of these sources, they can unknowingly become infected simply by touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. And once they're infected, it's usually just a matter of time before the whole camp comes down with the same illness. Good hand washing is your first line of defense against the spread of many illnesses - and not just the common cold.

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The spread of more serious illnesses such as meningitis, bronchitis, influenza, hepatitis B and most types of infectious diarrhea can be stopped with the simple act of washing your hands.

### **WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR BRUISING?**

A bruise (medically referred to as a contusion) is caused when tiny blood vessels are damaged or broken as the result of a blow to the skin. The raised area of a bump or bruise results from blood leaking from these injured blood vessels into the tissues as well as from the body's response to the injury.

There are a couple of things that you can do to prevent or minimize bruising after an injury. First, try a cold compress. Put ice in a plastic bag, wrap the bag in a towel (applying the ice directly to the skin can cause frostbite), and place it on the injured area. The cold reduces the blood flow to the area and therefore limits bleeding into the skin and reduces the size of the bruise. The cold also decreases the inflammation in the area of the injury and limits swelling in this way as well. If possible, elevate the area above the level of the heart. The lower an extremity is below the heart, the more blood will flow to the area and increase the bleeding and swelling.

### **WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CARE FOR A CUT OR SCRAPE?**

The most important first step is to thoroughly clean the wound with soap and water being careful to remove any foreign material, such as dirt or bits of grass, that might be in the wound and which can lead to infection. The area should then be kept clean and dry. Covering the area with a bandage (such as gauze or a band-aid) helps prevent infection and dirt from getting in the wound. A first aid ointment can be applied to help prevent infection.

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SPRAIN AND A STRAIN?**

A sprain is an injury to a ligament - a stretching or a tearing. One or more ligaments can be injured during a sprain. The severity of the injury will depend on the extent of injury to a single ligament (whether the tear is partial or complete and the number of ligaments involved).

A strain is an injury to either a muscle or a tendon. Depending on the severity of the injury, a strain may be a simple overstretch of the muscle or tendon, or it can result in a partial or complete tear.

### **WHAT CAUSES A SPRAIN?**

A sprain can result from a fall, a sudden twist, or a blow to the body that forces a joint out of its normal position. This results in an overstretch or tear of the ligament supporting that joint. Typically, sprains occur when people fall and land on an outstretched arm, slide into base, land on the side of their foot, or twist a knee with the foot planted firmly on the ground. Although sprains can occur in both the upper and lower parts of the body, the most common site is the ankle.

### **WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A STRAIN?**

Typically, people with a strain experience pain, muscle spasm, and muscle weakness when they attempt to move the injured joint. They can also have localized swelling, cramping, or

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inflammation and, with a minor or moderate strain, usually some loss of muscle function. Severe strains that partially or completely tear the muscle or tendon are often very painful and disabling.

### **HOW ARE SPRAINS AND STRAINS TREATED?**

Treatment for sprains and strains is similar. The goal is to reduce swelling and pain. Follow a formula of rest, ice, compression, and elevation (RICE). A tensor bandage may be wrapped around the affected area to help give support.

### **STINGING INSECTS - (BEE STINGS, WASP STINGS, OTHERS)**

Most insect sting reactions are not allergic and result in local pain, itching, swelling, and redness at the site of the sting. Local treatment is usually all that is needed for this type of reaction. Disinfect the area, keep it clean, and apply ice. The most serious reaction is the allergic reaction which varies from person to person. The most severe is called anaphylaxis and can be fatal. Severe reactions are suspected if a person experiences hives and intense itching at sites other than the sting site. Difficulty breathing, swallowing, hoarseness, swelling of the tongue, dizziness and fainting are signs of a severe allergic reaction. These types of reactions usually occur within minutes of the sting, but have been known to be delayed for up to 24 hours.

#### **Prompt treatment is essential and emergency help is often needed.**

- 1) Avoid disturbing likely beehive sites; such as large trees, tree stumps, logs and large rocks.
- 2) If a colony is disturbed, run and find cover as soon as possible.
- 3) Running in zigzag pattern may be helpful.
- 4) Never stand still or crawl into a hole or other space with no way out.
- 5) Do not slap at the bees.
- 6) Cover as much of the head and face as possible, without obscuring vision, while running.

### **WHAT DOES AN ALLERGY MEAN?**

An allergy refers to a misguided reaction by our immune system in response to bodily contact with certain foreign substances. It is misguided because these foreign substances are usually harmless and remain so to non-allergic people.

Allergy-producing substances are called "allergens." Examples of allergens include pollens, dust mite, molds, dander, and foods. Allergens are substances that are foreign to the body and can cause an allergic reaction in certain people.

- 1) Hives are skin reactions that appear as itchy swellings and can occur on any part of the body. Hives can be caused by an allergic reaction, such as to a food or medication, but they also may occur in non-allergic people.
- 2) Typical hive symptoms are raised red welts & intense itching.

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### **ALLERGIC SHOCK**

Shock refers to the insufficient circulation of blood to the body's tissues. Shock is most commonly caused by blood loss or an infection.

Allergic Shock (Anaphylaxis or Anaphylactic Shock) is a life-threatening allergic reaction.

Allergic shock is caused by dilated and "leaky" blood vessels, which result in a drop in blood pressure. This response typically occurs when the allergen is eaten (for example, foods) or injected (for example, a bee sting). Some or all of the following symptoms may occur:

- Hives or reddish discoloration of the skin
- Nasal congestion
- Swelling of the throat
- Stomach pain, nausea, vomiting
- Shortness of breath, wheezing
- Low blood pressure or shock

### **PREVENTION MEASURES FOR ANAPHYLAXIS**

Preventing anaphylaxis is the ideal form of treatment. However, that may not always be easy since insect stings are frequently unanticipated and allergic foods are often hidden in a variety of different preparations. Since avoidance is not fail safe, a person at risk for an anaphylactic reaction must be adequately prepared in an emergency to handle a reaction. It is recommended that everyone at risk carry epinephrine injection kits designed for self- administration. These kits are available by prescription only and come in two forms:

- 1) Epi-pen is a spring-loaded automatic syringe that delivers a predetermined dose (0.3mg) when the tip is pressed hard for several seconds. An Epi-pen junior is available for children under 33 pounds and contains half of the dose.
- 2) Ana-kit contains a preloaded syringe and needles with two 0.3mg doses of epinephrine. These are injected under the skin or into the muscle of the thigh. An antihistamine, alcohol swab, and a tourniquet are included in the kit.