

Circular 080:07:07



To: Club Presidents
Club Captains
Chief Instructors
Regional Officers

Assessors
Club Secretaries
AMSAR Services
District Officers

From: Greg Scott, Support Officer – Lifesaving Services

Date: 19 July 2007

Subject: Jellyfish Treatment Update

Action: Please circulate information to ALL Club Members

Background

LSV uses medical, resuscitation and first aid techniques endorsed by the Australian Resuscitation Council (ARC). The ARC has recently undertaken an extensive review of scientific research regarding the treatment of jellyfish stings. This has resulted in the 'ARC Envenomation – Jellyfish Stings' guideline being updated at their July 2007 meeting. LSV has adopted the new treatment protocols:

Changes

1. Blue Bottle (physalia) Treatment – for non-tropical coastline areas of Australia

- Wash off remaining tentacles with seawater, or pick off with the fingers (this is usually not harmful to the rescuer)
- Immerse the victim's stung area in hot water (no hotter than the rescuer can tolerate)
- If local pain is not relieved or immersion facilities not available, paradoxically the application of cold packs or wrapped ice is also effective

The treatment listed above should replace the treatment for bluebottle stings as listed in all SLSA Training Manuals, particularly on page 53 of the 32nd Edition.

All SLSA Training Manual 32nd Edition Version 2 as sold after 1st July 2007 has been updated with the amended treatment protocol.

2. Pressure Immobilisation Technique

The ARC has also made the following comment about the role of pressure immobilisation technique:

"There is no evidence that the Pressure Immobilisation Technique will decrease venom absorption in jellyfish stings. Therefore, pressure immobilisation technique is not recommended for jellyfish stings".

Therefore, the section on 'Treatment of Major Stings', as listed on page 56 of the SLSA Training Manual 32nd Edition Version 2, will be removed from the Training Manual in the 33rd Edition, and the use of compression bandages in jellyfish stings is to **cease** as part of treatment from the date of this bulletin by all LSV members and services.

The treatment for all other jellyfish stings, including the *box jellyfish* and *irukandji*, and other venomous sea creatures is to remain as stated within the SLSA Training Manual 32nd Edition Version 2.

NEW TREATMENT GUIDELINES FOR MARINE STINGERS EFFECTIVE JULY 2007

Management of Tropical Jellyfish Stings (Generally not found in Victoria)

- Remove the patient from the water and restrain if necessary
- Call for an ambulance (dial 000 and seek assistance from a lifesaver/lifeguard if available)
- Assess and commence resuscitation as necessary following the DRABCD principles
- Liberally douse the stung area with vinegar to neutralise invisible stinging cells; do not wash with fresh water
- If vinegar is unavailable pick off any remnants of the tentacles (this is usually not harmful to the rescuer) and rinse sting well with seawater (not freshwater)

Management of non-tropical Bluebottle Stings:

- Pick off any adherent tentacles with fingers (this is not harmful to the rescuer)
- Rinse stung area well with seawater to remove invisible stinging cells
- Place the victim's stung area in hot water (no hotter than the rescuer can comfortably tolerate)
- If local pain is unrelieved by heat, or if hot water is not available, the application of cold packs or wrapped ice may be effective

Management of other non-tropical minor Jellyfish Stings:

- Keep the victim at rest, reassured if conscious, and under constant observation
- Do not allow rubbing of the sting area
- Pick off any adherent tentacles with fingers (this is not dangerous to the rescuer)
- Rinse stung area well with seawater to remove invisible stinging cells
- Do not wash the sting with fresh water
- Apply cold packs or wrapped ice for pain relief
- If local pain is unrelieved, or generalised pain develops, or the sting area is large [half of a limb or more], call an ambulance (Dial 000 and seek assistance from a surf lifesaver/lifeguard)

Note that pressure immobilisation technique is not recommended for jellyfish stings, contrary to advice in the 32nd Edition of the Training Manual.

**For additional detail on this Circular contact:
Greg Scott, Support Officer – Lifesaving Services**

Email greg.scott@lifesavingvictoria.com.au or by phone: **03 9676 6935**
Circulars are also available at www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au

Address: PO Box 353 South Melbourne DC 3205