

❖ FIRST AID

We all live busy and active lives, and especially if you have children then you will fully understand that little 'accidents' always seem to pop up when we least expect it!! So knowing what is best suitable for our family when they have minor injuries and when we should be getting them looked at by the doctor is extremely important.

By no means is this a First Aid course or book; it is simply questions/scenarios that I have been asked in my experience as a pharmacist most commonly on a weekend! It is simply to use as a guide until you can receive medical treatment and I hope that the advice that is provided can speed up your visit to the hospital or doctor that otherwise would have been delayed or ignored.

❖ BURNS

As a general rule, burns that are larger than a 20 cent coin need to be attended to by the doctor especially in children, elderly, pregnant women or in diabetics. They can blister and become infected very easily and cause dehydration.

No matter what the burn is caused by; steam, heat, hot frying pan you must never put ice on it as this can cause it to blister. To take the heat away from the skin always:

Keep the area under cool running water for at least 20 minutes initially and then 10 minutes of every hour for the first 24 hours.

Remove all jewellery, belts or restrictive clothing from the area so that it does not become hard to take off if it becomes swollen. But, if clothes have become stuck to the skin; do not attempt to take them off. Go straight to the hospital.

What products exist to treat MINOR burns OTC?

Solosite or Solugel are the main products of choice as they are moist gels that keep it cool and contain anti-bacterials to stop it from getting infected. Both of these products should be applied to the area 4 times a day until the burn has healed. It is ideal to cover the burn with a non-stick dressing that is waterproof if you are going outside, but make sure that the gauze fits the entire area otherwise you will rip the skin off when you remove it.

There are second skin type products such as Allevyn that exist to help promote the healing of burns but they cannot be used if the area is weeping.

Some pharmacies keep Flaminal or Flaminal Hydro which promote moist healing and prevent it from getting infected. It is specially designed for burns and very effective. Stay away from powders as it can encourage it to scab and scar.

Are there any natural products that might help heal my burn?

There are some vitamin products that may assist in healing burns such as; vitamin A, C, E which are strong antioxidants as well as Zinc, Selenium and CoQ10 to help repair the skin tissue.

Try to keep the area as cool as possible and keep up your fluids so you don't lose too much water through the open skin.

❖ SUNBURN

Sunburn can be very severe and serious. Despite the obvious risk of skin cancer as a result of the sun burn traumatising the skin cells; the skin can blister up and become very tender, red and sore.

Prevention is the key; so wearing SPF 50 + and at least SPF 30+ 30 minutes before being exposed to the sun will help, as well as putting on a hat and wearing long clothing to cover the arms and legs. You can also apply zinc on your nose and under the eyes and remain in the shade where ever possible and avoid the peak times of UV radiation between 10am-2pm and 11am-3pm during daylight savings.

If you do get burnt though, there are a few things to consider:

- ✓ Ensure you are well hydrated as the skin can lose a lot of moisture especially if it starts to blister. If you do suffer any dizziness, headache or high body temperature then you may have heatstroke.
- ✓ Try to cool the skin in cool running water of a shower so that the water can take the heat away from the skin. Do this for at least 20 minutes but do not use ice.
- ✓ Keep the skin cool by using cool wash cloths/sponges

What products are available to treat sunburn?

ALOE VERA: this is a natural anti-inflammatory that also cools the skin down and prevents blisters from forming. It can be applied as often as you like to get relief. Putting the gel in the fridge can make it more soothing when applied.

SOLARCAINE OR EGO SOOV SPRAY: these contain a local anaesthetic which can numb the skin for at least 3 to 4 hours. It also has an anti-bacterial so if the skin does blister it stops it from getting infected. Being a spray you don't have to touch the skin directly which is good!

SOLOSITE OR SOLUGEL: this is a moisturising and cooling gel with an anti-bacterial that can be used on large areas of the skin to prevent blistering and infection from occurring.

❖ **HEATSTROKE**

This is a serious reaction when you are in the sun for extended periods of time and can lead to headache, dizziness, an increase in body temperature and hot flushed skin. It can lead to dehydration or unconsciousness if the body temperature has not been brought back to normal, so needs to be looked at by a doctor.

Heat exhaustion is the condition before heatstroke occurs. It is when a long duration of being in the sun leads to headache, dizziness, nausea, sweating and has clammy skin. Their actual body temperature has not risen at this stage yet.

How do you treat heatstroke?

You will need to cool the body down but not too quickly. Start by going indoors or in the shade and take off all the outer clothing.

Try to sponge down the body with cool water or use one of those Surgi Pak's Cool it bands on your forehead or behind your neck. It is important to get as much air as possible. They should be checked by their doctor or hospital to ensure no serious complications occur. Drink plenty of water and electrolyte replacements like Hydralyte or Gastrolyte so you don't get dehydrated.

❖ **INFECTIONS**

As a general rule signs of infection of the skin usually are;

- x Redness
- x Inflammation
- x Heat
- x Weeping or oozing of fluid/pus/discharge
- x Sore to touch
- x May be a fever present

These can occur from the skin breaking and if there is any sign of infection you must see your doctor. No questions. The antiseptic products over-the-counter are not strong enough; although better than using nothing until you see your doctor.

❖ **INGROWN TOE NAILS**

People often come asking for products for their in-grown toe nails. However, there is nothing that you can do OTC! You may put Betadine liquid on the nail to reduce the redness if caused by an infection, but is not able to penetrate enough to improve the situation.

You will need to go to the doctor or podiatrist to have it trimmed, removed and possibly requires antibiotics.

❖ **EYE INJURIES**

NEVER take injuries or issues with the eye lightly. There are serious consequences if an issue is missed or ignored and it is not worth the risk!

If there is a foreign object in the eye or chemical burn:

You may feel an irritation if there is something in your eye but try NOT to rub it as it may force the object further back in the eye and make it harder to remove.

Look in the mirror or get someone to look into your eye to see if they can see the object. Use saline vials to help flush the eye until it comes out. If the object looks deeply embedded or is not minor or if there is any pain, redness or difficulty getting it out then go straight to your doctor, hospital or optometrist.

If there is an eye wound or a flash burn:

It will be best to put an eye patch or a bandage if you have one to cover the eye so that light or air does not cause any pain. Go straight to a doctor or hospital.

No eye-drop from the pharmacy will help; any redness is a result of the trauma and should not be 'masked'. Any pain or changes in vision must be attended to ASAP.

❖ **NOSE BLEEDS**

These can be caused by various factors; sinus infection, picking your nose, a sign of high blood pressure or a serious condition that needs to be reviewed by your doctor.

If it is caused by a head injury or a possible nose fracture or if you are recurrently experiencing nose bleeds, then you should get a full assessment completed ASAP.

How do you stop a nose bleed when it occurs?

Sit down and breathe through your mouth. Then pinch the fleshy part of the nose as you tilt your head slightly forwards.

This should be done for 10 minutes and usually this is sufficient time for the bleeding to stop. However keep doing this until all signs of bleeding stops.

It is also a good idea to put cold packs or towels on the back of the neck or forehead to help reduce blood flow in this region. Ensure you get sufficient rest and keep well hydrated. If there is any pain, headache or dizziness or the bleeding starts up again; go to the doctor!

❖ **ANIMAL BITES: E.G DOGS**

If you get bitten by an animal, firstly take care of yourself to make sure they do not do it again! Try to warn other people around without aggravating the animal as to what has happened.

For a superficial bite; you should put the area under cool running water to try and wash away germs. Cover the area and go to your doctor. You may need a tetanus booster injection if it has been 10 or more years since your last one and the Dr can make sure no tendons have been damaged and may prescribe pain medications and/or antibiotics.

If it a deep bite; if the bleeding is uncontrollable, raise the injured part to help blood flow away from the area. Then apply direct pressure to the wound with gauze or any clean material that you can. Seek urgent medical assistance.

❖ **FUNNEL-WEB SPIDER BITES AND SNAKE BITES:**

Hopefully this never happens, but if you may see the offending snake or spider and try to take mental note of a description (without spending too much time doing this of course!) to tell the doctors so that they can give you the correct anti-venom.

1. Remain sitting and do not walk around as this can circulate the venom throughout the body
2. Bandage the entire limb firmly with a compression bandage or any type of material that is available.
3. Immobilise the limb and make a splint but make sure that you have not cut off circulation completely.
4. Call 000 or 112 and give them as much information as possible.

❖ **REDBACK SPIDER BITES**

The bite of this spider can kill a person, so keep as still as possible and apply ice to the area to reduce blood flow and remove the pain. Try not to move around at all.

Call 000 or 112 immediately

❖ **BRUISES**

Once an injury has occurred try to elevate the area to heart level and this will reduce blood flow to this area and reduce any bruising.

You should apply ice wrapped in a cloth to the area for at least 10-15 minutes initially and the 10 minutes of every hour for the first 24 hours and this will reduce any inflammation also.

How do you treat bruising?

There are three major products that are used to treat bruising OTC. Care needs to be used in people taking medication to thin their blood such as Aspirin, warfarin or any other clotting related medications and it is safest not to use it.

1. HIRUDOID and LASONIL: heparinoid

This is a cream that helps to thin out the pooling of blood on the area of injury. It should be applied two to three times daily until the bruise disappears.

2. ARNICA: arnica officinalis

This is a completely natural medication that can either be applied to the area or taken orally to help with the inflammation/bruising on the inside. It is much gentler than the other two and may be suitable if bruising occurs on the face or after surgery as it will not interfere with bleeding unlike the other two.

❖ SPLINTERS

This is when a piece of wood comes off an object and lodges into your skin. It can cause pain and possibly lead to infection as bacteria can enter the open wound.

- ✓ Clean the area around the splinter with soap and warm water (this will clean but also soften the skin to make it easier to come out).
- ✓ If you can get a sterilised splinter probe then use this to get to the area and pull the splinter out and if you can tell which angle that it went in take it out that same direction.
- ✓ Try to squeeze the area once it has come out so that it bleeds which hopefully can flush out any dirt left behind.
- ✓ Wash the area again and apply an antiseptic cream and then cover with a waterproof Band-Aid.

If the splinter probe has not worked to remove the splinter, then you may need to apply some drawing ointment; Magnoplasm or Ichthammo to the area to help bring out the splinter. Keep the area covered.

It will be vital to keep checking for signs of infection as it can happen after removing a foreign object; in which case see your doctor.

❖ TICK BITES

If you have been bitten by a tick then you may still see part of it in your skin. It is vital not to leave any part of it still in the skin if you try to pick it out. If you are not confident to remove it using sterile tweezers then you should go to your doctor who can remove it safely.

❖ BOX JELLY FISH STINGS

This occurs in tropical climates and its sting can be fatal. These cause intense pain and may cause nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps, back pain, headache and difficulty breathing.

Keep the person calm and flood the area with vinegar for 30 seconds and Call 000 or 112.

❖ OTHER JELLYFISH STINGS (BLUEBOTTLE, JIMBLE, IRUKANDJI, SEA ANEMONES)

Try and remove any tentacles that may be left on the skin but do not wash it off with fresh water.

Apply a cold compress or ice to reduce the pain and call 000 or 112

❖ ANAPHYLAXIS

This is a serious reaction that your body goes through if you have a severe allergy to something. It is very dangerous and can lead to death.

What are signs of anaphylaxis?

The main signs to watch for include;

- x swelling of the lips/tongue
- x Breathing is affected, wheezing and can lead to suffocation
- x Red blotchy hives on the skin
- x swelling of eyes, face and neck
- x rapid pulse rate

Hopefully if you are anaphylactic then you will be wearing a MEDIC ALERT BRACELET so that this people will know what to do! If you notice these symptoms in someone else, then look on their chest or wrist for a medic alert bracelet and it will say what their condition is.

How do you treat Anaphylaxis?

If you are the patient it is possible that you may be in no state to give yourself the EPI-PEN injection that could save your life. It is important to keep the pen with you at all times and wear a Medic Alert Bracelet so that someone else may be able to save you.

The Epi-pen is an automatic Adrenaline injection that stops these anaphylactic symptoms and the reaction from progressing any further enough until the ambulance arrives.

How do you use the EPIPEN?

1. Hold the EPIPEN in your fingers and remove the protective grey cap
2. Hold the injection tightly in your fists
3. Push/Jab the black tip firmly against the patient's thigh to release the medication. This can be done through their clothing.

❖ BEE STING OR WASP STING

If the sting is still on the skin, then using a plastic card if you have one scrape it sideways off your body. Do not use tweezers as this tends to release more 'venom' into the skin.

Try to cool the area with a cold compress in order to minimise the inflammation and redness that will come. It is probably a good idea to take anti-histamine to reduce the reaction that will occur:

TELFAST 180MG: TAKE 1 TABLET DAILY FOR 5 DAYS OR UNTIL SWELLING/ITCH HAVE GONE (specially designed for skin reactions)

❖ HEAD INJURY

If you have had a severe whack to the head it can be serious and cause a concussion or being made unconscious. It is vital to get medical assessment after all head injuries.

What are signs that indicate something is wrong?

The person should be watched for symptoms within 30 minutes for up to a few days and make sure behaviour or symptoms are not progressing.

- x Dizziness
- x Nausea/vomiting
- x Loss of memory
- x Drowsy, confused, disoriented
- x Headache
- x Fever
- x Paralysis of anywhere in the body

If a serious blow then you must call 000 or 112 without delay. Otherwise watch the patient and take to doctor or hospital.

❖ DRUG OR ALCOHOL POISONING

If anyone in your family, especially children takes any chemicals, medications or alcohol then you MUST call the:

POISONS INFORMATION CENTRE: 13 11 26.

This number should be on everyone's fridge as they could save a life. If there is any sign of drowsiness, losing consciousness ring the ambulance straight away and do not force/induce vomiting and stay with the patient at all times and notice any changes

They will ask you questions that will be useful in giving you the best advice;

- x What they might have been taken
- x how much they had
- x how much the person weighs
- x the age of the person
- x symptoms they may have
- x when they might have had it

❖ AMPUTATION

If someone has chopped a finger or toe then follow this advice until you reach the hospital;

- ✓ Do not give the patient anything to eat or drink as it may delay surgery if they need to have it
- ✓ Apply firm pressure on the injury site with a sterile dressing or gauze and raise the injured section above the heart level to reduce blood flow to the region.
- ✓ Try to bandage the affected area with a bandage and call 000 or 112 ASAP as they may go into shock or experience severe blood loss
- ✓ Watch for signs of shock
- ✓ Do not wash or soak the amputated part with anything
- ✓ Wrap the part in gauze and then place in a watertight container.
- ✓ Place this watertight container in a bag of ice; do not put the part directly in the ice!

❖ **KNOCKED OUT TOOTH**

An adult tooth may be re-planted; clean the tooth in saliva and milk and try to place it back in its original position. If it does not go back into its place then just hold the tooth where it belongs and get to the dentist.

If it does not replant then wrap the tooth in plastic or store in milk or sterile saline and go to the dentist ASAP.

Do not take any anti-inflammatories that will increase the bleeding and make their job impossible. However, you can apply ice to the jaw area to reduce any swelling and inflammation.

❖ **DIABETES EMERGENCY**

If someone is having a hypoglycaemic turn it can be life threatening and lead to death.

What are the signs of hypoglycaemia?

Check the wrist or person's chest for their Medic alert necklace/bracelets so you know exactly if they are diabetic. However, not everyone does have one.

Signs of hypoglycaemia include;

- ✓ Pale
- ✓ Clammy skin/sweating
- ✓ High pulse rate
- ✓ Shallow breathing
- ✓ Hungry/confused/slurred speech

How do you treat hypoglycaemia?

1. If the person is conscious:

You will need to give them a quick acting glucose source: jelly beans, orange juice, Glucodin glucose powder or a glass of water with 2 teaspoons of sugar. Once they feel a bit better then give them a long acting carbohydrate source such as a sandwich as this will provide them long lasting energy to power through.

2. If the person is unconscious:

If they are unconscious then do not give them any food or drink as they may choke on it.

Put them on the side and do the Airway, Breathing and Compression to help them become conscious.

If the patient has a Glucagon injection on them; then inject it into their thigh muscle and this will help the glucose stores in the body to breakdown into glucose that can be used. Hopefully this will make the patient conscious then do the above steps.

Call 000 or 112 immediately in case they do not become conscious.

❖ **EPILEPTIC SEIZURES**

People who suffer from epilepsy can have seizures at any time or place and whilst it is not advisable to stop someone who is having a seizure; it is important to remove any dangerous items and situations so that they do not get hurt from having the seizure.

1. If they are sitting help the person get to the floor so that they can't fall and get hurt
2. Place padding or a pillow under their head so that they do not sustain severe head injuries
3. Once the seizure has finished, if conscious let them rest and recover and get up in their own time
4. If they are unconscious then check airway and breathing and call 000 or 112

❖ **CPR: ADULT, CHILD, BABY**

This is a simple guide to what to do in an emergency; it is not written in depth as I truly believe that everyone should undergo a First Aid Course as a matter of priority especially if you have children.

What are the steps involved? DRABCD

D: DANGER

Check the surroundings for any signs of danger such as; fire, electric cables or oncoming traffic. If you will be putting yourself in danger call 000 or 112 immediately so there is not a second casualty.

R: RESPONSE

Check the patient to see if they are responding; without shaking them to see if conscious or unconscious.

A: AIRWAYS

Check their airways to make sure they are not blocked with any foreign objects. Place patient on their back and tilt back head and look inside their airways. Remove the object and if there is a lot of foreign matter then place them on their side so they do not choke.

B: BREATHING

If they are breathing, place the patient in the recovery position (see below)

If they are not breathing then start CPR:

2 breaths: 30 compressions at a rate of 100 compressions/minutes.
Lift their jaw, pinch their nostrils and breathe in fully and slowly into their mouth

C: CIRCULATION

Child and Adult:

Place your hands over the centre of the chest (sternum) and compress it 1/3 of the depth of the chest. Do not leave a gap of compressions for more than 10 seconds

2 breaths: 30 compressions at a rate of 100 compressions/minutes.
Lift their jaw, pinch their nostrils and breathe in fully and slowly into their mouth

Infants:

Only use 2 fingers on the lower half of the sternum and depress it by 1/3

2 breaths: 30 compressions at a rate of 100 compressions/minutes.
Lift their jaw, pinch their nostrils and breath in slowly into their mouth; but not excessively so it over-inflates their lungs, they are much smaller than adults...watch for their chest rising and falling

D: DEFRIBILLATION

Shopping centres and public places may have a defibrillator and this is very effective at restarting the heart.

What is the recovery position?

This is the safest position to place a patient so they do not choke or vomit.

1. Place the nearer arm to you across their chest touching their other shoulder.
2. Place their other arm at 90 degree angle
3. Bend the knee closer to you upwards and then roll them over to the side.
4. Make sure the top leg is at 90 degree angle
5. Gently tilt the head back to open airways and gently open the mouth slightly

I would recommend every Australian be First Aid certified and it would be fabulous if they were taught in our senior schools. Excellent courses;

- ✓ St John's Ambulance Senior First Aid