

FIRST AID – Level 2

"First Aid is the immediate care given to an injured or sick person until the services of a physician can be obtained." This is the opening sentence in the American Red Cross First Aid Textbook for Juniors, and is the definition of First Aid. Notice that first aid is the immediate care that is performed before the professional medical assistance arrives. First aiders are not expected to be doctors or to have a great knowledge about medicine. If you are called on to administer first aid to an injured person, you must be able to recognize and treat some very important problems. Knowing what to do and what not to do before the professional arrives is expected.

EARACHE

When someone complains of an earache or an insect gets in the ear, a few drops of warm water, warm milk or mineral oil placed in the ear will help relieve the pain. A small wad of cotton in the ear will help keep the liquid in. Warmth applied to the side of the head may also help ease the pain.

EYE INJURIES

If someone has been poked in the eye, it is best for a doctor to examine it. If the injury is serious, both eyes should be bandaged to prevent further damage by eye movement. If a small piece of dirt is in the eye, tell the victim not to rub it, but have someone gently pull on the eyelids to locate the foreign particle. Once it is found, it can easily be lifted off with the corner of a handkerchief or other clean cloth.

FAINTING

Fainting is caused by a lack of blood to the brain. If the person feels like fainting, but is still conscious, have him sit down with his head between his legs. If he has fainted, lay him down and keep his head lower than the rest of his body.

FRACTURE

If a person has a broken bone, the area will be painful, very tender, swollen and discolored. Treat him for shock and move him as little as possible. If you have to move the victim, immobilize the fracture with a splint. To immobilize a limb properly, you should splint the joints above and below the fracture. Don't bind the splint too tight so that the circulation will be cut off. If a broken bone protrudes through the skin, the limb should be sterilized in position and the wound covered with a wet, thick, sterile gauze pad and bandaged firmly in place. Don't try to cleanse the wound and do not try to straighten the limb to a natural position.

FROSTBITE

Frostbite occurs when your skin has been exposed to cold temperatures and it is beginning to die. Frostbite normally occurs in your feet, hands, nose or ears. It can be quite painful. Get the victim to a warm shelter as soon as possible and have him drink warm liquids. Thaw slowly with lukewarm (NOT HOT) water or by gently wrapping in a warm blanket or clothes. **DO NOT RUB THE AFFECTED AREA WITH SNOW OR YOUR HANDS, NOR PLACE IT NEXT TO A HEAT SOURCE SUCH AS A STOVE OR FIREPLACE.**

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Too much heat and insufficient salts cause Heat Exhaustion. The victim's face will be pale and sweaty and breathing will be shallow. The victim may also vomit. Treat him for shock by keeping him warm and his head lower than his body. If the victim is conscious, he can be given small amounts of salted water (one teaspoon of table salt to 1 pint of water).

HYPOTHERMIA

When the body is exposed to chilling temperatures for an extended period of time, the internal body temperature begins to drop. When this happens, the victim will begin to lose coordination and as the internal temperature continues to drop, he will become drowsy and possibly incoherent. If he is not treated immediately, he will lose consciousness and die. Hypothermia can occur even when the outside air temperature is 50 degrees and it is windy and raining. It is important to get the victim out of his wet clothes, under a shelter, into a warm sleeping bag and drinking warm fluids. If hypothermia is in advanced stages, the victim will be unable to produce his own body heat and someone will have to be in the sleeping bag with him to provide the necessary heat.

POISONING, INTERNAL

The symptoms of internal poisoning are stomach pains, headaches, vomiting and possible burning around the mouth. The first thing is to determine what type of poison has been ingested. As a general rule, if the poison is an acid, do not induce vomiting but rather neutralize it by having the victim drink a mixture of baking soda and water or milk. If the poison is a caustic or alkaline solution, it is best to try to get the victim to vomit by drinking salt water or sticking your fingers down his throat. If you are unable to determine what type of poison the victim has taken, do not do anything except to keep the victim calm and quiet. Obtain medical help immediately.

POISONING, EXTERNAL

There are several plants that can cause your skin to react adversely when you come in contact with them, including poison ivy, poison sumac and poison oak. If you know that you have touched one of these plants, wash the affected area with soap and water and rinse with alcohol. If the skin does break out, applying calamine or some other lotion can reduce the itching, specifically designed for skin poisoning.

PUNCTURE WOUNDS

Whether you step on a nail or get a fishhook caught in your finger, there is always the danger of lockjaw with a puncture wound. The nail is easy to remove but a fishhook should be pushed all the way through your finger until the barb is sticking out the other side. The barb is then cut off and the fishhook pulled back out. If the fishhook is not very deep, try backing it out. With a finger or thumb, press down firmly on the shank of the hook near the bend. This disengages the barb from the tissue. Looping a length of string around the bend of the hook, pull firmly, jerking the barb out. Treat any puncture wound by washing it and applying an antiseptic. You should then see a doctor.