



## MEDIA RELEASE

30 November 2007

# Put your family's safety first this summer

As the weather heats up and people spend more time outdoors, St John is sending a timely reminder to keep first aid skills up to date.

There are a number of common ailments that affect people more frequently in the summer months such as sunburn, bluebottle stings, bee stings, burns and heat exhaustion and also more serious incidents such as drownings and motor accidents.

277 people drowned in Australian waterways between 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2007, according to the 2007 National Drowning Report.

"Most of these deaths occurred when people were taking part in leisure activities. Although swimming, fishing and water sports are great fun in summer, there is always an element of risk and it is extremely important that people know what to do should an emergency occur," said Robyn Galwey, General Manager Training, St John (NSW).

"Over the holiday period more people are on the roads and it can be vital to know first aid. Over the Christmas/New Year break alone last year there were 63 road fatalities across Australia.

"There are also other minor conditions that you should be prepared for in summer. People spend more time outdoors and even a few extra moments in the sun can lead to severe sunburn or heat exhaustion."

Sunburn is caused by overexposure to the sun and can happen even on an overcast day.

"St John recommends wearing protective clothing, using at least 15+ sunscreen and wearing sunglasses outdoors. It's also important to keep up your fluid intake and avoid extended periods in direct sunlight to avoid heat exhaustion," said Ms Galwey.

"While many people believe these conditions are to be expected throughout the summer months, they can be very dangerous and often need medical attention. It is important to know how to recognise severe symptoms and how to treat the conditions until medical attention is available."

St John first aid courses are designed to equip you with the knowledge and confidence to deal with a first aid situation. St John also recommends having a first aid kit close by. To book a course or to get your first aid kit up to date call St John on 1300 360 455.

**Please find a list of summer-related first aid tips below.**

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### St John DRABC Action Plan

**Danger** - Is anyone in danger?

**Response** - Is the person responding?

**Airway** - Is the airway clear and open? Clear mouth and tilt head back.

**Breathing** - Can you hear or feel casualty breathing?

**Circulation** - If not breathing commence CPR. For adults, children and infants: 30 chest compressions and 2 breaths

### Sunburn

- Rest casualty in a cool place.
- Place under a cold shower, in a cold bath, or sponge with cold water.
- Give cool drinks.
- Seek medical aid for young babies and casualties with blisters.

### Bluebottle stings

- DON'T try to wash the sting off with fresh water.
- Pick off any tentacles with tweezers or your fingers.
- Apply a cold pack to reduce pain.

### Bee stings

- Remove stings by scraping sideways with your fingernail or with the edge of a knife.
- Apply a cold pack.
- Watch for allergic reactions - breathing difficulties, rashes, itching, or swelling around the mouth or eyelids.

If an allergic reaction takes place follow DRABC and call 000 for an ambulance.

- Observe and record pulse and breathing.
- If casualty is carrying medication for the allergy it should be taken at once.
- If conscious: help casualty to sit in a position which most relieves breathing difficulty.
- If unconscious: check ABC and prepare to resuscitate if necessary.



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### Heat Exhaustion

- Lie the person down in a cool place with circulating air.
- Loosen or remove almost all clothing.
- Sponge with cold water.
- Give fluids to drink.
- Seek medical aid if casualty vomits or does not recover promptly.

### Burns

- Hold the burned area under cool running water for at least ten minutes
- DON'T break any blisters or apply any lotions or ointments.
- Put a sterile non adherent dressing over burned area (or alfoil, plastic wrap, or a wet clean dressing).
- If burn is bigger than a twenty cent piece – seek medical aid.

### Snake bites

- Using a roller bandage (about 10-15cm wide), pantyhose or other similar material, firmly bandage the entire limb, but not so firmly as to stop the flow of blood.
- Start bandaging from just above the fingers or toes and work upwards.
- Splint the bandaged limb.
- Ensure casualty does not move.
- *Call 000 for an ambulance.*
- DON'T cut the bitten area.
- DON'T suck the venom out or wash venom off.
- DON'T apply a tourniquet.
- DON'T try to catch the snake

#### Preventing Snakebites:

- Make lots of noise when walking in the bush.
- Always wear shoes outside.
- Don't put your hands and feet where you can't see what's there.
- Keep grass cut around your home.

### Near Drowning

Never attempt a rescue beyond your capability. Do not become a casualty yourself and remember all first aid starts with the St John DRABC Action Plan.

- If the person isn't breathing
- Begin CPR.
- *Call 000 for an ambulance.*



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The best solution is prevention:

- Make sure your entire family can swim.
- Always supervise children near water.
- Never drink and swim.
- Always swim between the flags.
- Keep your first aid skills up to date by booking into a St John First Aid refresher course.

***For more information on St John (NSW) first aid courses, kits and products call 1300 360 455 or visit [www.stjohnnsw.com.au](http://www.stjohnnsw.com.au)***