

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**16 September 2008**

# Keep safe this spring with St John

With the weather warming up and flowers starting to bloom, it is clear that spring is upon us. St John Ambulance is reminding people of a few of the most common spring safety tips, and to encourage even more people to learn first aid. First aid advice and training can make a huge difference to your safety, and to that of your family. As well as the tips below, St John always recommends having a suitable first aid kit close by.

### **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 such as breathing difficulties, rashes, itching, or swelling around the mouth or eyelids
- If an allergic reaction takes place call 000 for an ambulance
- 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 - open and clear the casualty's airway, prepare to resuscitate if necessary

### **Snake & Spider bites**

#### *Snake/Funnel-Web/Mouse Spider*

- Check for signs of life – if casualty is unconscious, follow DRABCD (see below)
- Calm casualty
- Apply a firm roller bandage starting just above the fingers or toes and moving up the limb as far as can be reached
- Immobilise casualty – apply splint to immobilise bitten limb
- Check circulation in fingers or toes and ensure casualty does not move
- Call 000 for an ambulance

#### *Other tips*

- Do not wash venom off the skin as retained venom will assist identification
- Do not cut bitten area or try to suck venom out of wound
- Do not use a constrictive bandage
- Do not 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

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### *Red-back spider*

- Apply icepack to bitten area and seek medical aid
- Ensure casualty does not move
- Call 000 for an ambulance

### **Allergic Reaction (Anaphylaxis)**

Anaphylaxis occurs after exposure to an allergen (such as food, insect sting or medicine) to which a person is already extremely sensitive.

If the casualty is carrying an EpiPen for the allergy, it should be used at once. Where State or Territory legislation permits, administer the EpiPen according to the recommended Anaphylaxis Action Plan

- Call 000 for an ambulance
- Keep casualty in lying or sitting position
- Observe and record pulse and breathing
- If conscious – help casualty to sit in position that assists breathing
- If unconscious – check for signs of life and prepare to give CPR if necessary

### **Asthma**

- If casualty is unconscious - follow DRABCD (see below) and call 000 for an ambulance
- If casualty is conscious - make casualty comfortable by helping them into a comfortable position – usually sitting upright and leaning forward
- Ensure adequate fresh air
- Tell casualty to take slow, deep breaths

### *Help with administration of casualty's medication:*

- Give 4 puffs of a blue reliever inhaler – casualty takes a breath with each puff
- Use a spacer if available - give 4 puffs, one at a time-casualty takes 4 breaths after each puff
- Wait 4 minutes
- If no improvement, give another 4 puffs
  
- If attack continues call 000 for an ambulance

### *For a severe attack, until ambulance arrives, keep giving:*

- Children – 4 puffs every 4 minutes
- Adults – 6-8 puffs every 5 minutes

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### Unconscious casualty

- Check for **Danger**, to yourself, others and casualty at the accident scene. This is the critical first step otherwise you could be the next casualty and unable to help others
- Check for a **Response** from the casualty — gently squeeze casualty's shoulders and shout to see if the casualty is conscious
- Now, check the **Airway** — open mouth and look for foreign material. If foreign material present, turn casualty into the recovery position while supporting the neck and spine, remove any foreign objects. If no foreign material present, leave casualty on back
- Next, check **Breathing** — look, listen and feel for breathing:
  - + If breathing, place casualty in the recovery position, check for signs of life regularly and manage any injuries. Ring 000
  - + If not breathing, call 000 for an ambulance. Turn casualty onto their back and tilt the head back. Lift chin to open the airway, pinch the nose closed and breathe into the casualty's mouth for about one second, watch chest rise and fall. Repeat sequence to give 2 initial breaths. Ensure the chest rises with each breath
- Then check for signs of life:
  - + If no signs of life: not breathing, not responding and not moving, commence cardiopulmonary resuscitation (**CPR**)
- If casualty shows signs of life, place in recovery position, assess and manage any bleeding and other injuries. Continue to monitor casualty's breathing, movement and consciousness until medical aid arrives
- Attach a **Defibrillator** (if available) – follow voice prompts

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).

**ENDS**

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