8. Health

In general, rowing delivers many health benefits but there are some hazards and risks that must be assessed and managed. This chapter explains some of these hazards and risks and provides guidance on how to deal with them.

However, the effectiveness of general guidance is limited and should never be used as a substitute for individual guidance from a medical specialist.

This chapter of RowSafe contains the following sections:

8.1 Cold Water Immersion and Hypothermia

8.2 Sunburn, Heat Illness and Exhaustion

8.3 First Aid

8.4 Waterborne Infections and Diseases

8.5 Concussion

8.6 Coping with Illness and Diseases

- 8.6.1 Common Illnesses
- 8.6.2 Chronic Conditions and Diseases
- 8.6.3 Asthma

8.7 What To Do If Someone Collapses

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RowSafe provides general guidance to clubs and their members on safe practice in rowing. It is however the responsibility of each club to maintain up-to-date risk assessments and define and monitor its own safety practices, guidance and procedures specific to its environment and activities, which clubs shall ensure are made known to their members and members shall comply with the same.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the medical and other similar information and guidance in this manual is accurate and reflective of best practice at the time of publication, it is the users' responsibility to ensure that such information and guidance is up to date before acting upon it. British Rowing accepts no responsibility for the content of third party websites accessed through links in this publication.

8.1 Cold Water Immersion and Hypothermia

No matter how good a swimmer you are, sudden unexpected immersion in cold water can cause an initial cold shock that affects muscular co-ordination and impairs the ability to swim. Heat loss from immersion can quickly cause hypothermia. Any of these factors can lead to drowning. Everyone has a responsibility to assess and manage the risk of immersion in cold water and to know what to do if it occurs.

Expectations

Everyone

Everyone is expected to:

- Have studied the effects by completing the British Rowing Cold Water & Hypothermia online learning module.
- Know and watch for the symptoms of mild hypothermia (such as complaints of feeling cold and tired, poor comprehension, disorientation, poor concentration, irrational behaviour, violent outbursts and confusion).
- Understand the effects of cold water immersion and hypothermia.
- Be prepared for those effects if immersed in cold water.
- Wear clothing appropriate to the conditions (see Keep warm and Introduction to Coxing and Steering online learning for those people who are involved in coxing).
- Report incidents to the club and British Rowing.

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Wear clothing appropriate to the conditions

Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Ensure that the risks of cold water immersion and hypothermia are included in the club's Risk Assessments.
- Provide members with information about cold water immersion and hypothermia.
- Provide facilities for the initial treatment of hypothermia.
- Include hypothermia in their Emergency Response Plan.

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Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Know and watch for the symptoms of severe hypothermia (such as shivering, pale, blue lips and nails, rapid breathing, wheezing and coughing, fast pulse and slurred speech).
- Know how to respond if they detect any of these symptoms.
- Set an example by always wearing clothing appropriate to the conditions (see Keep Warm).
- Ensure that their coxes wear clothing appropriate to the conditions (see Introduction to Coxing / Steering online learning).
- Ensure that they are equipped to deal with people with hypothermia.

Event

Event Officers and Organising Committees are expected to:

- Ensure that the risks of cold water immersion and hypothermia are included in the event's Risk Assessments.
- Provide officials, umpires, launch drivers, safety boat crews, other personnel and participants with information about cold water immersion and hypothermia.
- If appropriate, provide facilities for the initial treatment of hypothermia.
- If appropriate, include hypothermia in their Emergency Response Plan.

British Rowing

British Rowing:

- Provides guidance to clubs through RowSafe.
- Provides an Incident Reporting System.
- Provides Safety Alerts and other safety communications.
- Provides safety training material on its website.
- Provides courses that include safety.
- Provides advice and training materials on cold water immersion and hypothermia.

Further Information

- Cold Water & Hypothermia online learning module - rowhow.org/free/cold_water_course_latest_version
- Keep Warm Safety Article - britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Keep-warm.pdf
- Introduction to Coxing/Steering online learning - rowhow.org/course/view.php?id=144
- British Rowing Incident Reporting System - incidentreporting.britishrowing.org
- Safety Alert Archive - britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/safety-alert-archive

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8.2 Sunburn, Heat Illness and Exhaustion

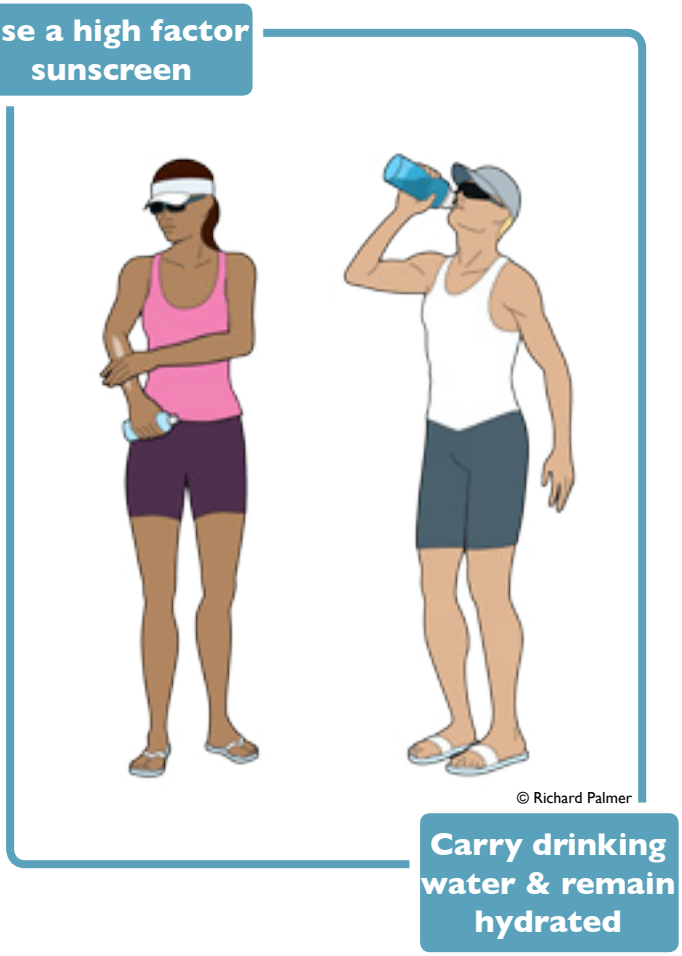
Prolonged exposure to sun can cause sunburn or skin damage at any time of the year, not just in the summer. The body produces a lot of heat when exercising. When dehydration occurs, body temperatures can rise to levels that cause heat illness (hyperthermia).

Expectations

Everyone

Everyone is expected to:

- Understand the effects of hyperthermia (heat illness and heat exhaustion) and sunburn (see Avoiding Heat Illness in the Club Coach material and NHS Choices Introduction).
- Be prepared for those effects if exposed to heat or sun.
- Use a high factor sunscreen and wear clothing appropriate to the conditions (see Introduction to Coxing / Steering online learning).
- Carry drinking water and remain hydrated.
- Observe fellow rowers and watch out for signs of hyperthermia or sunburn (see under "Coaches" below).



Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Include the risks of exposure to sun and heat leading to sunburn, heat illness and exhaustion in the club's Risk Assessments.
- Provide members with information about sunburn, heat illness and exhaustion.
- Include hyperthermia in their Emergency Plan.
- Provide First Aid facilities.
- Ensure that drinking water is available.

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Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Have read Avoiding Heat Illness - Club Coach Course material (if you have a UKCC Level 2 Club Coach qualification) and have studied the effects.
- Know and watch for the symptoms of heat exhaustion (such as high levels of fatigue/ tiredness, dizziness, nausea/vomiting, chills or shivering, fast weak pulse, clammy cool skin, appearing pale, numbness or tingling in head, neck, back or hands).
- Know and watch for the symptoms of heat illness (such as confusion/lack of mental clarity, inability to hold a conversation, bizarre behaviour, hot, red skin, fainting, headache, rapid strong pulse and sweating).
- Know how to respond if they detect any of these symptoms.
- Set an example by always wearing sunscreen and clothing appropriate to the conditions.
- Ensure that their crews wear sunscreen and clothing appropriate to the conditions (see Introduction to Coxing / Steering online learning).
- Ensure that their crews remain hydrated and take breaks and rest in the shade.
- Ensure that they are equipped to deal with sunburn and heat illness and exhaustion.
- Consider rescheduling outings to cooler parts of the day.

Event

Event Officers and Organising Committees are expected to:

- Include the risks of exposure to sun and heat leading to sunburn, heat illness and exhaustion in the event's Risk Assessments.
- Provide competitors and officials with information about sunburn, heat illness and exhaustion.
- Include hyperthermia in their Emergency Plan.
- Provide First Aid facilities.
- Ensure that sufficient drinking water is available.

British Rowing

British Rowing:

- Provides information about the causes, effects and symptoms of sunburn and heat illness in relation to rowing.
- Provides an Incident Reporting System.
- Provides guidance to clubs through RowSafe.
- Provides Safety Alerts and other safety communications.
- Provides safety training material on its website.
- Provides courses that include safety.

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Further Information

- Club Coach course material - Avoiding Heat Illness - rowhow.org/course/view.php?id=120
- Introduction to Coxing / Steering online learning - rowhow.org/course/view.php?id=144
- British Rowing Incident Reporting System - incidentreporting.britishrowing.org
- Safety Alert Archive - britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/safety-alert-archive
- NHS Choices - Introduction - nhs.uk/Conditions/hypothermia/Pages/Introduction.aspx
- NHS Choices - Symptoms - nhs.uk/Conditions/Hypothermia/Pages/Symptoms.aspx
- NHS Choices - Treatment - nhs.uk/Conditions/Hypothermia/Pages/Treatment.aspx

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8.3 First Aid

Many of the provisions identified in the Risk Assessments are means of reducing the probability of a hazardous event occurring, but it is also appropriate to make provisions to reduce the severity of harm should a hazardous event occur. First Aid is one of the most commonly used of those provisions.

Expectations

Everyone

Everyone is expected to:

- Report any injuries to First Aiders or Club Officers.
- Report any deficiencies in First Aid cover or problems summoning emergency assistance to the club.
- Report First Aid and medical incidents to the club and to British Rowing.

Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Use the Club Risk Assessment to define the requirements for First Aid provision. Factors to be considered include:
  - Location of the club for example, remote or in a built-up area, easy or difficult access.
  - Type and extent of boating area.
  - Potential hazards such as obstructions, weirs and limited access points.
  - People, for example number of members, age and rowing experience.
  - Hazards in other club facilities such as kitchen or workshop.
  - Travel time to the nearest hospitals with an A&E Department or Minor Injuries Unit and type of cover offered.
  - Details of the service provided by the local NHS ambulance service (this varies from region to region).
  - Availability of other rescue services such as air ambulance and lifeboat.
- Include First Aid provision in the Club Emergency Response Plan (see RowSafe 3.3), brief members on the content and make the plan available.
- Ensure that the club has sufficient First Aiders and that adequate First Aid cover is available during all club activities.
- Make provision for people suffering from mild hypothermia (people with severe hypothermia should be taken to hospital).

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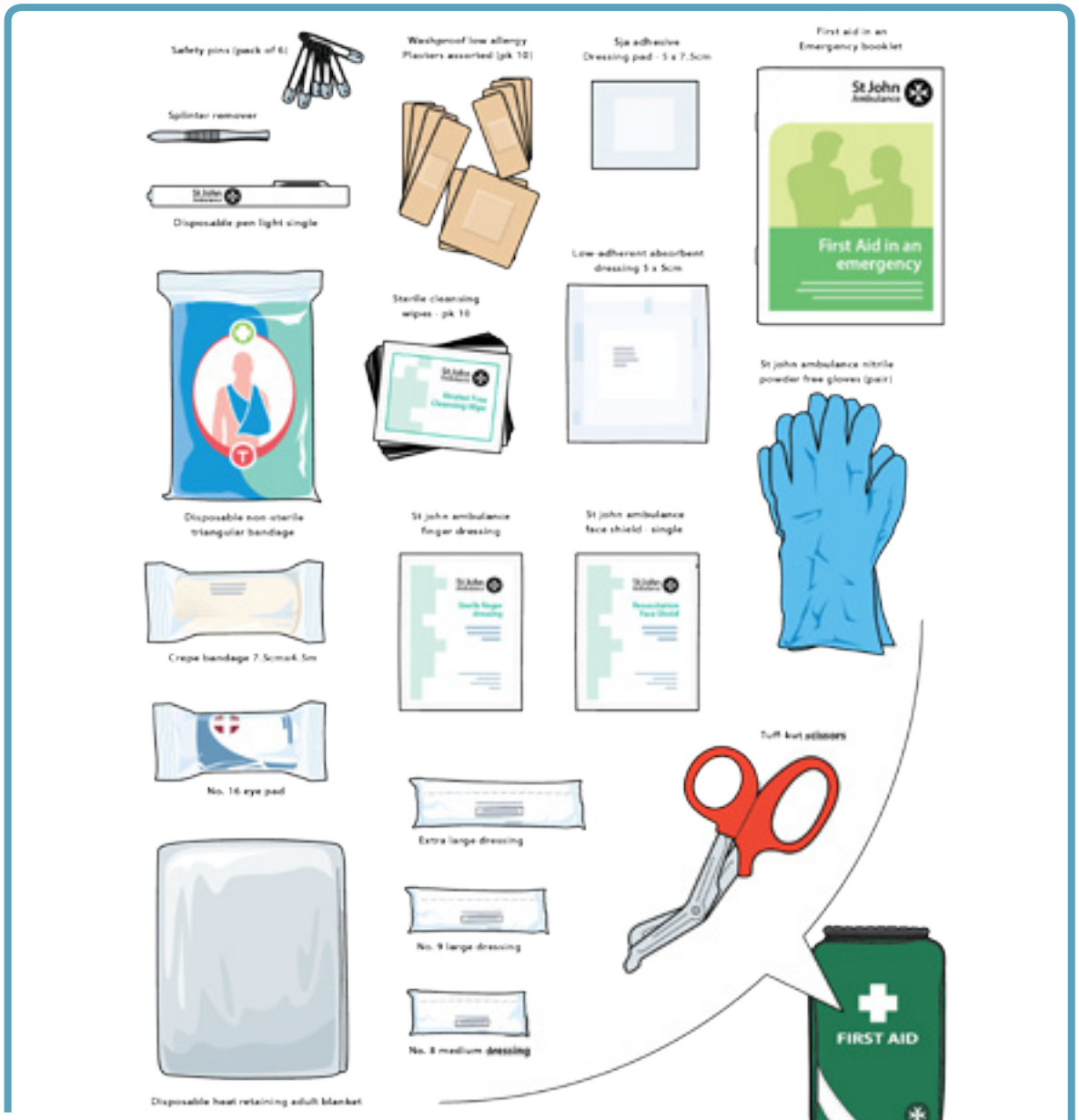
- Keep a record of coaches and other members who hold a First Aid qualification and encourage First Aiders to keep their qualification up to date.
- Prominently display a list of qualified First Aiders (with photos if possible).
- Provide sufficient and clearly marked First Aid kits in easily accessible areas of the club premises. Each kit should contain a list of contents.
- Regularly check contents against the list of contents, record and date the inspection and replenish supplies.
- Ensure that all launches carry a First Aid kit and sufficient thermal blankets for the crews concerned.
- Maintain adequate supplies of First Aid consumables and equipment including emergency blankets) in good condition.
- Consider providing Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) technique training to all club members.
- Consider providing an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) in the club.



Keep all First Aid kits well stocked

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Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Keep their First Aid qualification up-to- date by attending a First Aid course at least every three years.
- Encourage members to report First Aid and medical incidents in the British Rowing Incident Reporting System.
- Ensure that rowers know where the First Aid kits are kept and which members are qualified First Aiders.

Event

Event Officers and Organising Committees are expected to:

- Use the Event Risk Assessment to define the requirements for First Aid provision. Factors to be considered include:
  - Location of the competition, for example, remote or in a built-up area, easy or difficult access.
  - Extent of boating areas and type of race such as large head race or short, contained regatta.
  - Potential hazards such as cold or hot weather, capsize and limited access points.
  - People, for example number of competitors (age and rowing experience), spectators and supporters.
  - Hazards in other event facilities such as catering.
  - Travel time to the nearest hospitals with an A&E Department or Minor Injuries Unit and type of cover offered.
  - Details of the service provided by the local NHS ambulance service (this varies from region to region).
  - Availability of other rescue services such as air ambulance and lifeboat.
  - First Aid Point(s) - How many and where should they be positioned; how First Aiders will be identified.
- Include First Aid in the Event Emergency Response Plan (see RowSafe 4.3), brief participants and make it available to all involved in the event.
- Ensure that the event has adequate First Aid cover. The appropriate level of cover may include the appointment of a Medical Officer or the provision of an ambulance or paramedics.
- Make provision for people suffering from mild hypothermia (people with severe hypothermia should be taken to hospital).
- Where First Aid cover is provided by a third party, agree the scope of the cover to be provided.
- Provide information and signage to ensure that competitors and spectators are aware of the location of the First Aid facilities.
- Ensure that all launches carry a First Aid kit and sufficient thermal blankets for the crews concerned.

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Regional Rowing Councils

Regional Rowing Councils are expected to:

- Provide support and advice to events in their region on first aid cover.
- Review the First Aid cover as part of the Event Emergency Response Plan and provide feedback.
- Give, or withhold, permission for the event to take place.

British Rowing

British Rowing:

- Provides guidance to clubs through RowSafe.
- Provides an Incident Reporting System.
- Provides Safety Alerts and other safety communications.
- Provides safety training material on its website.
- Provides courses that include safety.
- Provides advice on First Aid training.
- Provides an Event Organisers' Manual.

Further Information

- RowSafe 3.3 - Club Emergency Response Plan
- British Rowing Incident Reporting System - incidentreporting.britishrowing.org
- RowSafe 4.3 - Event Emergency Response Plan
- Event Organiser's Manual - britishrowing.org/events/organising-events/event-organisers-manual
- Safety Alert - Staying Alive - britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Safety-Alert-Staying-Alive-FINAL.pdf?78251f

Other

- HSE Basic advice on first aid at work - hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg347.pdf
- HSE First aid at work leaflet (See page 2 for First Aid kit contents) - hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf
- Royal Life Saving Society - rlss.org.uk
- British Red Cross - redcross.org.uk
- St John Ambulance - sja.org.uk

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8.4 Waterborne Infections and Diseases

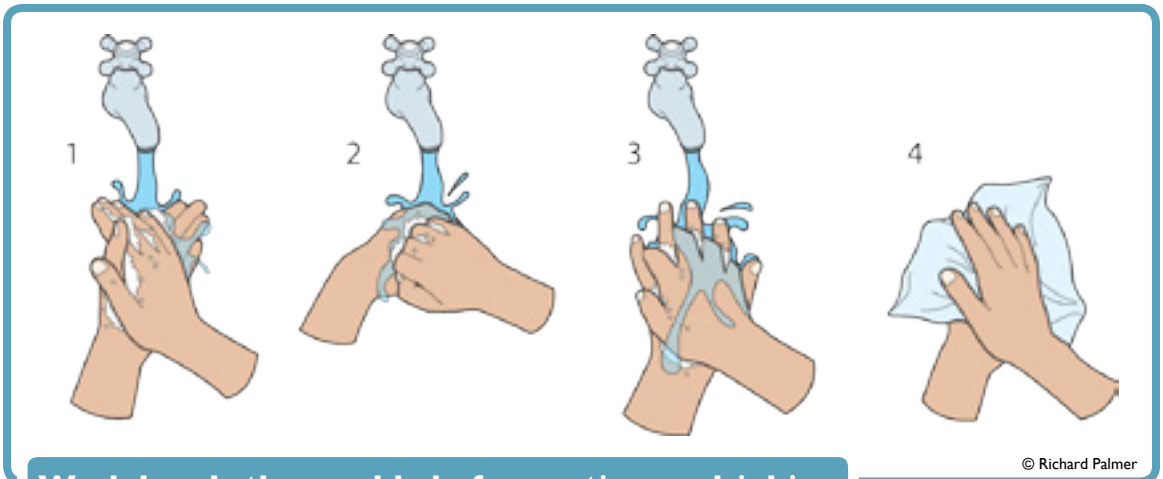
Diseases can be caused by waterborne infectious agents such as bacteria or viruses, or contracted due to exposure to other contaminants in the water. These can include, for example, algal blooms, jelly fish (at sea), faecal matter and chemical contamination.

Expectations

Everyone

Everyone is expected to:

- Read and understand any information on waterborne infectious agents and contamination provided by the club.
- See their own doctor as soon as they think that they may have any relevant symptoms.
- Inform the club if they have contracted a disease associated with a waterborne cause so that others can be encouraged to take greater precautions.
- Cover all cuts or grazes with waterproof dressings if the water is contaminated.
- Wash or shower after any significant contact with water from the river, lake, canal or sea especially if they have any exposed cuts or grazes.
- Never drink water from sources such as rivers, lakes, canals or sea.
- Wash hands thoroughly before eating or drinking.
- If contaminated water has been swallowed, refer to their doctor with full details of the incident.
- Wear suitable footwear when launching or recovering a boat, particularly if it is necessary to wade into the water, to prevent direct contact with the water and protect the feet from cuts and abrasions.



Wash hands thoroughly before eating or drinking

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- Hose down all equipment after outings to remove any potential contamination.
- Report incidents to the club and British Rowing.

Hose down all equipment after outings

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Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Determine the extent to which the waters that they use may be infected with relevant bacteria, viruses or other agents (the Local Authority Environmental Health office and the local Water Authority may be able to help).
- Include these risks in the club's Risk Assessments.
- Provide information (such as posters) to members as appropriate. This information should include:
    - Precautions to be taken to avoid exposure.
    - Early signs and symptoms of any relevant disease so that early medical intervention can be sought.

Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Be aware of the extent to which their participants are at risk of contracting a disease associated with a waterborne cause.
- Bring information about the risks and appropriate actions to the attention of participants.
- Monitor the behaviour of any persons at risk and ensure that they act appropriately.

Event

Event Officers and Organising Committees are expected to:

- Determine the extent to which the waters that they use may be infected with relevant bacteria, viruses or other agents (the Local Authority Environmental Health office and the local Water Authority may be able to help).
- Include these risks in the event's Risk Assessments.
- Provide information (such as posters) to umpires, officials, launch drivers, safety boat crews, other personnel and participants as appropriate. This information should include:
    - Precautions to be taken to avoid exposure.
    - Early signs and symptoms of any relevant disease so that early medical intervention can be sought.

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British Rowing

British Rowing:

- Provides an Incident Reporting System.
- Provides guidance to clubs through RowSafe.
- Provides Safety Alerts and other safety communications.
- Provides safety training material on its website.
- Provides courses that include safety.

Further Information

- British Rowing Incident Reporting System - incidentreporting.britishrowing.org
- Safety Alert Archive - britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/safety-alert-archive
- Weil's Disease - britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/health-and-fitness/rowing-and-water-borne-disease

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8.5 Concussion

Concussion is the sudden but short-lived loss of mental function that occurs after a blow or other injury to the head. It is the most common but least serious type of brain injury.

Concussion does occur in rowing. It is important that it is recognised and that appropriate action is taken. Any blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body which causes a sudden jarring of the head may cause a concussion.

Expectations

Everyone

Everyone is expected to:

- Recognise the signs and symptoms of concussion, (see NHS - Symptoms of concussion).
- Know how to get help if someone is concussed.
- Take care to avoid head injuries.

Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Ensure that their First Aid provision can assist a person with concussion.
- Ensure that their members know how to get help in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that the boathouse is kept tidy so as to reduce the probability of a head injury.

Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Recognise the signs and symptoms of concussion.
- Know how to help someone who is concussed.
- Coach crews to handle boats on land carefully so as to reduce the probability of a head injury.

Event

Event Officers and Organising Committees are expected to:

- Ensure that their First Aid provision can assist a person with concussion.
- Provide information to participating clubs on how to get help if needed.

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British Rowing

British Rowing:

- Provides guidance to clubs through RowSafe.
- Provides an Incident Reporting System.
- Provides Safety Alerts and other safety communications.
- Provides safety training material on its website.
- Provides courses that include safety.

Further Information

- NHS Symptoms of concussion - nhs.uk/Conditions/Concussion/Pages/Symptoms.aspx
- NHS Treating concussion - nhs.uk/Conditions/Concussion/Pages/Treatment.aspx
- British Rowing Incident Reporting System - incidentreporting.britishrowing.org
- Safety Alert Archive - britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/safety-alert-archive
- Safety Alert - Head Injuries - britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-May- 2015-Head- Injuries.pdf

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8.6 Coping with Illness and Diseases

People who are not feeling well, recovering from an infection, or suffering from a chronic condition should take care when exercising. It is important to seek medical advice in these situations.

Rowing is a team sport. Rowers should be encouraged to look after their fellow rowers. If they look unwell, then they should be asked how they feel and if there is concern they should be encouraged to recover or to seek medical advice before they exercise.

Expectations

Everyone

Everyone is expected to:

- Not attend training or competition if they have an infectious illness.
- Inform the club, their coach and other crew members if they are suffering from or recovering from an infectious illness or are feeling unwell.
- Practice good hygiene (wash hands, disinfect equipment – many gastro-intestinal and upper respiratory tract infections can be prevented by good basic hygiene).
- If unwell then:
  - Refrain from training until they feel they have fully recovered.
  - Follow medical advice about how much exercise is appropriate.
  - Withdraw from competition.
- Look after other club members - if they look unwell ask them how they are feeling and, if they are not well, encourage them to rest.

Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Encourage members to refrain from training and competing when unwell.
- Avoid putting pressure on member to compete when unwell.
- Make members aware when there is a danger of passing on infectious diseases.
- Provide hand washing/cleansing facilities.
- Provide disinfection materials for cleaning equipment.
- Encourage member to seek and follow medical advice when appropriate.

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Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Check that rowers are fit to row.
- Encourage rowers to refrain from training and competition when unwell.
- Avoid putting pressure on rowers to compete when unwell.
- Take account of rowers' known health issues when training or planning training programmes.

British Rowing

British Rowing:

- Provides guidance to clubs through RowSafe.
- Provides an Incident Reporting System.
- Provides Safety Alerts and other safety communications.
- Provides safety training material on its website.
- Provides courses that include safety.

Further Information

- RowSafe 8.6.1 - Common Illness and Diseases
- RowSafe 8.6.2 - Chronic Conditions and Diseases
- RowSafe 8.6.3 - Asthma

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8.6.1 Common Illnesses

From time to time most people suffer from common illnesses like gastroenteritis and respiratory disease. Here are some general guidelines:

- If you don't feel well, do not exercise to make yourself feel better.
- If you are unwell and wish to train or compete, you should seek medical advice.
- If you are uncertain, do not train or compete.

Rowing is a team sport - look after your fellow rowers. If they look unwell, ask them if they are feeling well and, if necessary, encourage them not to row.

There are two common illnesses that require particular care:

- Gastroenteritis (Diarrhoea and Vomiting), and
- Respiratory disease.

Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis is extremely contagious and can be passed on readily and rapidly if adequate precautions are not observed.

People who have gastroenteritis (the symptoms are diarrhoea and vomiting) should avoid mixing with friends and colleagues until they have fully recovered. They should take full hygiene precautions (such as hand washing) to limit cross-infection risks.

It is recommended to avoid exercise immediately following gastroenteritis as this can lead to myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart.

People who have gastroenteritis should:

- Not exercise until 48 hours after all the symptoms have disappeared and their appetite has returned.
- Withdraw from training and competition.
- Practice good hygiene (wash hands, disinfect equipment).
- Not put themselves and others in their crew at risk - be socially aware.
- If their symptoms persist, seek medical advice.

Respiratory Disease - Such as colds and coughs.

People who are suffering from respiratory disease such as colds and coughs:

- Should not exercise if they have difficulty breathing when exercising.

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- If their symptoms persist, then they should seek medical advice.

Viral illnesses can make the symptoms of asthma worse. Rowers, and others, who use an asthma inhaler may have to submit a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE), as they may exceed the daily maximum dose. Check the advice on asthma (See RowSafe 8.6.3) and with WADA.

General Illness

People who are feeling generally unwell should:

- Limit or withdraw from training.
- Consider whether they are fit to row.
- Not return to training until they are fully recovered.
- If they continue to fell unwell, seek medical advice.
- Follow the medical advice given.

Remember, if you train or compete when feeling unwell, even from minor illness, then you will not perform to your best potential and thereby let down your rowing colleagues. If you are unwell during training or competition and require emergency medical treatment this will cause serious concern and alarm amongst your colleagues. It may even put your colleagues at risk.

Further Information

- RowSafe 8.6.3 - Asthma
- WADA - globaldro.com

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8.6.2 Chronic Conditions and Diseases

Rowing can help people who suffer from a chronic condition or disease to maintain and improve their health. There is more information in Rowing and Health.

Rowers may need medical advice to help them to determine how they can safely exercise with their illness. Medical advice is individual and personal. It would be wrong to copy or extrapolate from what other people have been told and to take medicines prescribed for someone else.

Clubs and events often ask members and participants if they have any medical issues that may affect their safety and the safety of others. It is not necessary to provide details of any conditions, this information is confidential, but it would be appropriate to share information about what type or extent of activity would be helpful and any that may be harmful.

This will help clubs and coaches to keep rowers safe.

Cardiac Disease

People who suffer from cardiac disease (including hypertension) that may compromise their rowing or training, are advised to seek medical advice from a Cardiac Specialist, Sports Medicine Doctor or Sport Physiotherapist, and to follow this advice. These specialists can advise on how much exercise should be undertaken, the limiting factors and on fitness to row or train.

When exercising, rowers should monitor:

- Their heart rate, and
- The effects of different types of exercise. For example, the reaction to longer steady state exercise compared with short sprint type exercise.

Tolerance to exercise can be built over a period of time.

Some people with heart disease have an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) - a small defibrillator implanted into the chest wall. Rowers with an ICD are not required to disclose this but should consider doing so. It could help if their coach and fellow crew members know what may happen if it self-activates and what, if anything, they should do.

Joint Injury or Illness

Rowers who are suffering from joint injury or illness should seek specialist advice on how to rest and exercise to avoid further injury. This particularly applies to weight training. Although rowing and indoor rowing are not weight bearing exercises, it is still possible to injure joints.

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Epilepsy

It is important to avoid being on the water until the risk of further seizures has become tolerable. Seizures of either a crew member or cox may put that person or others at risk of serious injury. Guidance on rowing with epilepsy is based on the DVLA guidelines.

Asthma

Asthma is common amongst athletes, even elite athletes. The general advice is:

- To take the prescribed inhaler just before exercise (although the initial effect is dilation of the bronchi this can last for three to four hours).
- To always carry the prescribed inhaler in the boat (or close by in the gym) so that symptoms can be treated without delay.
- To warm up and cool down carefully and effectively, especially in hot, dry dusty or 'asthma inducing ambient weather'.
- To minimise exercise with upper respiratory tract infections (such as colds and flu) as this will hasten the onset and make the asthma worse.

Care should be taken to check that the normal use of the inhaler complies with WADA rules. Increased dosing may require the submission of a TUE to comply with WADA rules (see RowSafe 8.6.3).

Diabetes

There is an article based on an interview with Sir Steve Redgrave. There is more information on the Diabetes UK website and the National Health Service website.

Further Information

- Rowing and Health - britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Rowing-Health-014-v1.3-Website.pdf
- Advice on Epilepsy - britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/health-and-fitness/rowing-and-epilepsy
- RowSafe 8.6.3 - Asthma
- Sir Steve Redgrave on diabetes - bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8095622.stm
- Diabetes UK - diabetes.org.uk
- NHS - Diabetes - nhs.uk/Conditions/Diabetes/Pages/Diabetes.aspx

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8.6.3 Asthma

Asthma is common, affecting 5.4 million people or one in eight people in the UK. It is most common in children, but also affects about a quarter of all elite athletes. Asthma does result in 1,200 people dying per year, but if managed correctly asthma should not be a barrier to a normal life or participation in sport.

The diagnosis of asthma is usually made by the GP, and treated with a variety of prescription inhalers – often a blue "reliever" and/or a brown "preventer". It is important to comply with the medication prescribed and to liaise with healthcare professionals if symptoms persist. It is important to remember that particularly for asthma, prevention is easier than cure.

Expectations

Everyone

Everyone is expected to:

- Recognise the symptoms of an asthma attack.
- Know how to support a person who is suffering from an asthma attack (see Treatment section).

Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Review the information below and communicate it to their members.
- Discuss it with their coaches, particularly coaches of juniors.
- Display relevant information wherever it will be most helpful.

Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Be aware of exercise induced and seasonal asthma.
- Ensure that all asthmatic rowers carry their inhalers on the water in a dry bag.
- Recognise the symptoms of an asthma attack and the difference between asthma and hyperventilation.
- Be aware of the Asthma Recovery Position (see Treatment section).
- Understand how to support a person having an asthma attack.
- Know how to access help.

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Rowers with Asthma

Rowers with asthma are expected to:

- Carry their relieving inhaler at all times.
- Take the prescribed inhaler just before exercise (although the initial effect is dilation of the bronchi this can last for three to four hours).
- Always carry the prescribed inhaler in the boat (or close by in the gym) so that symptoms can be treated without delay.
- Warm up and cool down carefully and effectively, especially in hot, dry dusty or 'asthma inducing ambient weather'.
- Minimise exercise with upper respiratory tract infections (such as colds and flu) as this will hasten the onset and make the asthma worse.
- Ensure that coaches and fellow rowers are aware of their condition and how best to manage it.
- Attend regular asthma reviews as advised by their GP.
- Check that their medication complies with WADA rules and submit a TUE if the dose schedule is exceeded.

Further Information

- WADA - globaldro.com
- Asthma UK - asthma.org.uk
- St John Ambulance - sja.org.uk/sja/first-aid- advice/illnesses-and- conditions/asthma-attack.aspx
- Netdoctor - Asthma brought on by exercise - netdoctor.co.uk/diseases/facts/asthma_exercise.htm
- BBC - What causes Asthma? - bbc.co.uk/science/0/21857582

Recognition Features

- Difficulty in breathing, with trouble exhaling.
- Wheezing as the casualty breathes out.
- Difficulty speaking and whispering.
- Distress and anxiety.
- Coughing.
- Features of hypoxia, such as a grey-blue tinge to the lips, earlobes and nailbeds (cyanosis).

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Treatment

Your aims during an asthma attack are to ease the breathing and if necessary get medical help.

- You need to keep the casualty calm and reassure them.
- Keep them upright
- Do not leave them alone.
- If they have a blue reliever inhaler, then encourage them to use it. Children may have a spacer device and you should encourage them to use that with their inhaler also. It should relieve the attack within a few minutes.
- You can improvise a spacer device using a polystyrene cup if necessary.
- Encourage the casualty to breathe slowly and deeply.
- Encourage the casualty to sit in a position that they find most comfortable, often leaning forward with arms resting on a table or the back of a chair. Do not lie the casualty down.
- A mild asthma attack should ease within a few minutes but if it doesn't encourage the casualty to use their inhaler again.
- The casualty may take one or two puffs of their inhaler every two minutes, up to a maximum of 10 puffs.

If this is the first attack, or if the attack is severe and any one of the following occurs:

- The inhaler has no effect.
- The casualty is becoming worse.
- Breathlessness makes talking difficult.
- The casualty is becoming exhausted.

Dial 999 (or 112) for an ambulance.

- Monitor and record the breathing and pulse rate every 10 minutes.

If the patient becomes unresponsive open the airway and check their breathing and be prepared to give emergency aid.

If the symptoms improve quickly then:

- Continue to sit with them until they are feeling completely well and can go back to previous activity.

If the casualty is a child or vulnerable adult then:

- Contact their parents or carers as appropriate and inform them about the situation.

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8.7 What To Do If Someone Collapses

Would you know what to do if someone collapsed and was unresponsive? How can you prepare for this situation?

Someone who has collapsed, is unresponsive and not breathing normally, is likely to have no heartbeat. It is vital to summon help and start chest compressions immediately.

Expectations

Everyone

Everyone is expected to:

- Read and understand notices displayed in your club showing:
  - How to call 999 for an ambulance and provide directions so that the ambulance can respond to your location quickly and easily.
  - How to perform hands only Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
  - Where to find an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED), if there is one nearby.
- Watch the British Heart Foundation (BHF) videos that show what to do if someone collapses (these videos can also be found by searching YouTube for "cpr vinnie" and "cpr mini vinnie").
- Download the BHF Pocket CPR app for Android or for iPhone and practice CPR.
- Attend CPR training if it is available.
- Study the Staying Alive Safety Alert.
- Be aware that the casualty will need further assessment and advanced medical care and must be taken to hospital, even if they appear to have recovered.

Club

Club Officers are expected to:

- Provide detailed information on how to call 999 for an ambulance and their club's location and access points by road.
- Encourage members to learn what to do if someone collapses.
- Provide training and learning opportunities for resuscitation and First Aid.
- Display information on resuscitation.
- Display a notice on the front door of the club, and elsewhere, saying where it is kept if the club has an AED.
- Display information showing how to retrieve one if the club does not have an AED, and if there is one nearby.

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- Offer support and counselling to anyone who has was present when someone collapsed. Further information is available from NHS Choices and help may be available from a General Practitioner, the NHS, Samaritans and ChildLine.

Although AEDs are expensive, they are emergency medical devices and should be readily accessible, and not locked in cupboards.

Event

Event Officers and Organising Committees are expected to:

- Ensure that they have an adequate number of appropriately trained Healthcare Professionals and First Aiders available.
- Have the ability to call 999 and the Emergency Services, especially in areas of poor mobile phone reception.
- Provide detailed information of the event's location and access points by road.
- Display a notice saying where it is kept if the event has an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED). It should be made available to the Healthcare Professionals and First Aiders attending the event.
- Display information showing how one nearby can be retrieved if the event does not have an AED.
- Ensure that all umpires and boating staff understand the rescue and medical facilities and how to use them.

Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Set an example by ensuring that they are fully competent to assist with a person who has collapsed.
- Encourage participants to learn how to assist with a person who has collapsed.
- Practice retrieval of collapsed rowers from boats.

British Rowing

British Rowing:

- Provides guidance to clubs through RowSafe.
- Provides an Incident Reporting System.
- Provides Safety Alerts and other safety communications.
- Provides safety training material on its website.
- Provides courses that include safety.

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Further Information

- British Heart Foundation - Hands-only CPR - bhf.org.uk/heart-health/how-to-save-a-life/hands-only-cpr
- BHF PocketCPR (Android) - play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.pocketcpr.pocbhf&hl=en_GB
- BHF PocketCPR (iPhone) - itunes.apple.com/gb/app/bhf-pocketcpr/id494718534?mt=8
- Safety Alert - Staying alive - britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Safety-Alert-Staying-Alive-FINAL.pdf
- British Rowing Incident Reporting System - incidentreporting.britishrowing.org
- Safety Alert Archive - britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/safety-alert-archive
- How to call an ambulance to the site (see Calling an ambulance section)
- NHS - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTD) - nhs.uk/conditions/Post-traumatic-stress-disorder/Pages/Introduction.aspx and NHS - Can I get free therapy or counselling? - nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/free-therapy-or-counselling.aspx
- Samaritans - samaritans.org
- ChildLine - childline.org.uk

Procedure

What to do if someone collapses, is unresponsive and not breathing normally

If you are on your own:

- Check that you are safe and shout for help.
- Start doing chest compressions to the rhythm of "Staying Alive".
- Call 999.
    - Ask for ambulance
    - Keep the phone line open
    - Put the phone on speaker
- Try to keep doing chest compressions while answering the call centre's questions.
- Keep doing the chest compressions until help arrives.

If you do not know or are uncertain how to perform chest compressions, then the call centre will take you through the procedure.

If there two or more persons are present:

- Person 1
    - Call 999 and ask for ambulance
    - Answer the call centre's questions
    - Leave the phone line open

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    - Put the phone on speaker
    - Get the AED if one is available
- Person 2
    - Do chest compressions to the rhythm of "Staying Alive"
- When you have finished talking to the call centre, you can both:
    - Share chest compressions until help arrives
    - Use the AED if available

Automatic External Defibrillators (AED)

If an AED is available:

- Call for help.
- Start chest compressions.
- Get or send someone for the AED.
- When the AED has arrived:
    - Switch on the AED
    - Follow the instructions from the AED while continuing with chest compressions

If CPR or an AED is used then the casualty will need further assessment and advanced medical care and must be taken to hospital, even if they appear to have recovered.

Internal Defibrillators

Some people have an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) which activates automatically if their heart stops. People with an ICD, do not have to tell anyone as this is confidential medical information. However, it could help others to help them if they explain what happens if the ICD is activated and what others should do to help.

If someone with an ICD has collapsed and is unresponsive, react as described above. It is safe to do chest compressions and you may see the casualty 'jump' as an internal shock is delivered. Call 999 for an ambulance and apply an AED if available and follow the instructions. It is important to follow routine cardiac arrest procedures and not to assume that the ICD is functioning.

Calling an Ambulance

If you need an ambulance:

- Call 999 or 112. In the UK, the service is identical.
- Ask for Ambulance.
- Stay on the phone.
- Give your phone number when requested in case of accidental disconnection.
- If you are using a mobile phone, make sure you stay where there is a signal.

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- You may be asked for the following information:
  - Age and gender of the casualty
  - Medical history (you may not know this)
  - Time of incident
  - What happened
  - Injuries or symptoms of the casualty
  - Vital signs - are they breathing, conscious, bleeding
  - Where the casualty is
  - What treatment have they received

You will receive advice from the call taker as to how to perform resuscitation, if necessary, or how best to manage the casualty until the emergency services arrive.

You will need to give the emergency services directions to reach the casualty quickly and easily. If the location is difficult to find or does not have a specific address, the emergency services may need more than an address and post code to find it, such as "it has blue gates, it's behind St. Mary's Church".

Your club should display posters showing how to contact the emergency services and containing directions. Event Organisers should ensure that umpires, race officials and other personnel have this information for the event venue. If possible the club or Event Organisers should check these directions with the emergency services to ensure that they can be understood by someone who is not familiar with the location.

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