

The health and safety of athletes, volunteers and spectators is the highest priority at every Special Olympics team practice, competition or special event. Risk reduction and accident prevention requires good planning, effective communication and a high level of awareness by all participants.

HEAT AND HYDRATION

Overheating and dehydration are serious dangers, **please be sure that athletes and volunteers drink plenty of water** throughout the competition and related activities. In hot weather, pure water is the best source of hydration (not soda or water-based drinks like coffee). Whenever possible, water coolers will be placed at each venue and refilled periodically by medical staff.

At outdoor events, avoid the sun whenever possible; wear hats and apply sunscreen frequently.

HYPOTHERMIA OR FROSTBITE

Prolonged exposure to cold temperatures can lead to hypothermia or frostbite. Wear several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. Wear mittens instead of gloves and always wear a cap. Signs of frostbite are white or pale fingers, toes, nose or ear lobes. Signs of hypothermia are uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, frequent stumbling, drowsiness and exhaustion.

Do not give a frostbite or hypothermia victim any liquid containing caffeine. Do not use hot water to warm cold hands or feet.

SEIZURES

Seizures sometimes occur under the stress of competition or strenuous activity. In the event a seizure occurs:

- Notify the on-site medical personnel, venue manager or Special Olympics staff.
- Place towel or coat under athlete's head; do not interfere with body movements.
- Do not force anything between the athlete's teeth.
- When movement stops, roll athlete onto side and make sure breathing is unobstructed.

Seizures normally last only a few minutes and the athlete requires only rest to recover. Medical personnel will determine if the athlete requires further treatment at a hospital.

INJURIES

Injuries can occur at any time, but are more likely as athletes encounter fatigue and dehydration. In the event an injury occurs:

- Keep the injured athlete calm and stationary; *do not move the injured athlete.*
- Contact the on-site medical personnel, venue manager or Special Olympics staff.
- Stay with the injured athlete until medical personnel arrive.

Medical personnel will evaluate the injury and determine if the athlete requires further treatment. Athletes requiring further treatment will be transported to an approved medical facility.

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORTING

A Special Olympics **First Report of Accident/Incident** form should be completed as promptly and accurately as possible. This procedure allows claims to be processed quickly and provides information for improved safety and risk reduction at subsequent Special Olympics events.