

Summary of changes: Spinal Management

NOTE: Please refer to the Learner Guide, Delivery & Assessment Guide and PowerPoint for the full details of the changes to the Spinal Management resources.

New things to note

- In January 2016, the Australian Resuscitation Council (ARC) recommended that rigid spinal collars should no longer be used by first aiders to manage suspected spinal injuries.
- Therefore, stiff neck collars are no longer to be used during SLS training or on Patrol (i.e. SLSA has adopted the ARC recommendation).
- SLSA now recommends that lifesavers only need to use manual in-line stabilisation to keep a victim's head still until ambulance or paramedic services arrive on the scene.
- SLSA also recommend that victims continue to be treated with care, protected from the elements, and that a detailed account of the treatment given and the signs and symptoms observed be shared with ambulance or paramedic personnel.
- SLSA emphasise that all unconscious victims should be extricated from the water immediately, by any means necessary, for further assessment on the beach. It is not possible to accurately assess a victim's breathing in the water.
- Where a victim presents to the patrol team with a sore neck or other symptoms suggesting a spinal injury (that is, a 'walk-up' spinal), the victim is to be instructed to lower themselves to the ground keeping their head still.
- Medical advice suggests that if a victim is able to walk, they are unlikely to be severely injured and are the best judge of which movements hurt or not.
- The lifesaver may offer assistance to the victim in the form of a hand or arm to lean on while the victim lowers themselves to the ground.
- If a victim cannot lower themselves to the ground even with this moderate level of assistance, then the lifesaving team will need to use the spinal board to assist the victim as per the procedure detailed in the training course.
- It is not necessary to use strapping when Patrol members are simply removing a victim from the water to the beach for further treatment. The use of strapping should be minimised as much as possible in order not to harm the victim any further.
- Strapping should really only be required for extricating (moving) a patient from a difficult or dangerous situation.

Assessment

- SLSA have streamlined the assessment and made it more flexible so that Assessors/Facilitators can choose which scenarios (from the Delivery and Assessment Guide) best suit a Clubs' environment or simulate previous incidents.
- The assessment may include scenarios involving both a victim in the water and/or extricating a victim from the beach. This would mean that where straps are used (routinely) in a clubs local environment, they would then use strapping in their training & assessment too.

- The expectation is that candidates would be able to handle any situation involving potential spinal injuries in their own Club's environment. Trainers and Assessors should be keeping this in mind when planning appropriate training and assessment scenarios.
- A unit of competency is no longer issued as part of the course.

Videos

The new Spinal videos can be viewed and downloaded from the Members Portal.

Folder Location: Education>Member>NSW>Spinal Management

NOTE: These videos can be used to support the Bronze Medallion course too.

Australian Resuscitation Council Guidelines

If you are interested to read the full guideline related to the management of suspected spinal injuries, please visit www.resus.org.au.