



## **Bushwalking Health - Care and First Aid**

Bushwalking is generally a pretty safe pastime. It is also beneficial for your physical, mental, and social health. There may be the occasional blister or stubbed toe, slips and falls usually only damage one's pride, some bits of our anatomy may protest at over use, or bugs may sometimes bite when we are not looking, but overall bush walking does not cause us too much grief. However, occasionally something unexpected does happen. Remember PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE in all bushwalking situations and only a few are out of our control.

### **Day Walk Routine**

1. Carry enough water and snacks for the planned walk – at least 2 litres of water.
2. Walking poles are recommended – these can reduce the stress on your knee joints by 60%. Adjust them to correct height – your hands should be in line with your elbows. If too short your body tips forwards. If too high your body tips backwards. Either of these can make you unstable on hills or rough ground and is tiring.
3. Where possible use a backpack with a waist strap. Each time you walk adjust the straps so the pack sits snugly/firmly on your waist/hips. Also adjust the side straps of the pack by pulling them down together so the pack sits firmly against your spine. Both these actions will reduce the weight resting on your shoulders helping to prevent back and neck problems.
4. Carry a small first aid kit in your pack and a small towel.
5. Carry something to sit on for morning tea and lunch stops – logs are often wet or black from previous burns.
6. Wear a shady hat.
7. Carry a waterproof covered card with your details, emergency contact number, any medical conditions you have and medications you are taking. These cards can be obtained from the Club Treasurer.



### **Tips for Happy Feet**

1. Stretches – calf and Achilles – before and after walking.
2. Keep skin soft – rough skin causes blisters – gently buff dry skin with a pumice stone then moisten with Vaseline.
3. Massage your feet regularly.
4. Keep toenails trimmed.
5. Use toe socks or 2 pairs of socks – one thin, one thick.
6. Treat hotspots immediately – you don't have to keep walking until the next tea or lunch stop. If you carry a hypoallergenic soft dressing in your pack, you can apply it when trouble starts. If you have any known trouble spots, you can apply a dressing before walking.
7. Wear well-fitting walk shoes or boots. Sandals are not recommended for walking in the bush but can be used on paved paths on summer walks. Definitely no thongs.
8. Don't break in new boots on a long walk.
9. Slow down your pace towards the end of your walk.

### **Dehydration**

Your body can survive for several days without food but only a short time without water. It also needs as much hydration on a winter's day walk as in summer. Carry at least 2 litres of plain water in your pack and drink regularly. Remember by the time you feel thirsty you are already dehydrated. Other signs of dehydration are dry mouth, headache, and dizziness and reduced urine output. Some medications have a diuretic effect as do tea and coffee so always drink some plain water at our regular drink stops.

### **Heat Exhaustion**

Walking will quickly warm you up so a handy motto to remember is "Be Bold Start Cold". Wear several layers of light clothing rather than one heavy one.

Also apply sunscreen before you walk and take a small container to reapply during the walk. You can buy handy packs of sunscreen that hang on your backpack from most supermarkets. Wear a hat or a cap.



### **Heat Exhaustion cont.**

Always walk at your own comfortable pace – don't rush to keep pace with faster walkers.

The group will wait at crossroads or any turns off the track and the walk leader will allow slower walkers time to have a drink and a rest etc. before resuming the walk. Remember Tail End Charlie is there for your safety and he or she will not leave you behind.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion are clammy skin, rapid breathing, constant headache, cramps and nausea. Dehydration can be a contributing factor but is not always the case. **Let someone know if you are feeling unwell.** Affected walker should be sat in the shade, unnecessary clothing removed, sponged down with water or a wet cloth to the back of the neck. A frillneck or cooling scarf – a narrow scarf containing beads which activate in cool water with a cooling effect when placed around the neck could be useful. Give sips of water as nausea settles.

### **Scrapes and Abrasions**

These are not so easy to prevent and are usually the result of a fall or bumping into something like a large rock. Long pants and long sleeved shirts will offer some protection. If scrapes or abrasions do occur always try to clean and cover any broken skin as soon as possible with a hypoallergenic soft dressing that may be in the first aid kit.

### **Blisters**

Again, prevention is better than cure so follow the tips on "Happy Feet" and treat any hotspots immediately with any of your favourite blister preventer. Check for creases in your socks when putting them on and on multiday walks always wear clean socks – salt from sweat can crystallise adding an abrasive effect.



## **Snakes and Spiders**

Australia is home to a lot of poisonous snakes and spiders and the best way to avoid being bitten is to leave them alone. If someone is bitten by a snake (usually on legs or hands) keep them calm and apply a pressure immobilisation bandage from the extremity of the effected limb to the top. Try to immobilise the limb with a splint (if known) and arrange evacuation of that person as soon as possible. Write down species of snake or spider (if possible), time of bite and time bandage applied and, if possible, mark the bite area on the outside of the bandage.

DO NOT elevate the limb,

DO NOT wash the area or cut or suck the bitten area,

DO NOT remove the bandages once they have been applied.

Get that person to hospital.

## **Slip. Trips and Falls**

These can happen at any time. Slipping on a wet rock or tripping over an obstacle or maybe not paying attention when walking over rough ground. Most people will want to get themselves up and carry on more embarrassed than anything else.

If anyone does fall, do not help them off the ground immediately. Encourage them to sit and recover. A fall can often cause shock, it also gives time to assess any injuries.

If there are any obvious signs of injury, treat as appropriate i.e. clean the area as best as you can and apply a dressing, if necessary. (Always ask the person if they have any allergies to any dressings or lotions that you may use).

Be guided by your casualty. If they want to get up, encourage them to remain down for a few moments longer to allow the body to recover. When they feel ready help them up, **but do so slowly.**



### **Slips Trips and Falls cont.**

Help the casualty take a few steps but be on hand if there are problems.

Monitor the state of the casualty until they have fully recovered or they cannot continue.

If they are not willing to continue, contingency plans will have to be put into place to get the casualty back to the starting place or get emergency help.

**ALWAYS BE GUIDED BY YOUR CASUALTY**

### **Ticks**

How do people know if they have been bitten by a tick? A tick bite usually looks like a small dark freckle with a scab, or mole, on the skin. A magnifying glass may be helpful to confirm a tick is present. As ticks are very small and their bites do not usually hurt, ticks can easily be overlooked on the body, especially if the tick is in a sheltered spot. Ticks prefer soft skin and hairy areas. People may be unaware when they are bitten by a tick, as the tick can inject small amounts of saliva with anaesthetic properties so that the person cannot feel that the tick has attached itself. In addition to the bite being painless, often the person will not sense a tick moving on their skin. However, once it starts to feed, it becomes noticeable, enlarging as it becomes filled with blood and eggs.

### ***HOW TO REMOVE A TICK IF YOU FIND ONE***

Do not try to squeeze or aggravate a tick as squeezing, burning or putting any substance on it can cause the tick to release its toxic saliva into you which increases the risk of tick-borne diseases.

There are two suggested methods of removing a tick

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, antiseptic solution or soap and water.



### **Ticks cont.**

2. You can kill the adult tick on your skin with a freezing product such as *Wart-Off Freeze* or *Elastoplast Cold Spray*. These sprays contain ether which freezes the tick, thus immediately killing it and preventing it from injecting its saliva or regurgitating its contents into you. You should then leave the tick in place until it drops off (taking care not to compress or squeeze it during this time) which it should do in the next 24 hours.. Once the tick has dropped off, clean the area with an antiseptic or soap and water.

### **When Should I Call the Doctor?**

You should consult a doctor if:

- a red-ringed rash develops or the skin area becomes red and irritated
- you develop flu-like symptoms
- You have joint pain or a swollen joint
- facial paralysis (can't move areas of the face)