

MANAGING ROWING-RELATED SKIN INJURIES

HAND BLISTERS

PREVENTION

- Try to keep hands and oar handles as dry as possible.
- Row with a relaxed grip

TREATMENT

Goal: To protect blisters, encourage healing and prevent infection.

1. Soak hands and fingers each evening (and in between rows if necessary) in hot salt (Epsom) water in a microwavable pie plate to help drain blisters. The water should be as hot as can be tolerated and warmed up in a microwave as it cools.
2. When the blisters break they should continue to be soaked... this will sting. Avoid removing skin covering as this will act as another layer of protection - a "biological bandage".
3. Dry hands with a towel, ideally a disposable paper towel, and apply Polysporin® ointment to blisters and any open sores to help avoid infection.
4. Bandaging hands to row:
 - a. Apply a small Band-Aid to over the open blister(s)
 - b. Then use a good quality electrical tape to cover the Band-Aid, wrapping around individual fingers, avoiding the joint if possible.
 - c. The tape should wrap around the finger and avoid leaving the tape seam on the palm-side of the finger where the hand will grip the oar handle.
 - d. It is common for newer rowers to have blisters on their palms so the same directions apply except they may need to wrap the tape all the way around the hand to help keep it on. By the end of the week you can end up looking like you have been in bar room brawl with all the tape!
 - e. Good quality electrical tape for this purpose: Should be thicker and top quality so that the adhesive isn't also sticking to the shiny side. We use a white electrical tape that is bought in a single roll package at CDN Tire. There is also a thicker 3M black electrical tape you can get at Home Depot.
5. As the blisters dry out they will crack and may bleed, especially if they are on or near joints. At night before going to bed applying a hand treatment for blistered hands may help this (e.g. Watkins Salve, Shoppers Drug Mart).
6. At the first sign of infection **seek medical attention from a doctor**. Signs of infection include: severe heat and swelling of the hand or area around the blister, oozing sore(s) (e.g. pus) and severe pain.
7. Oar handles should be cleaned after each row with disinfectant solution (in jug in boat house) and left to dry.

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SLIDE BITE

Abrasions or cuts to the calf area where the lower leg contacts the stern end of the seat track.

PREVENTION

- Ensure track caps are in place and secure;
- Check that the foot-stop height and track position is appropriate for you;
- Protect the area using a fabric band around the leg (e.g. old cut socks) or tape.

TREATMENT

See treatment for blisters above.

SUNBURN

PREVENTION

- Minimize exposed skin area. Wear a hat, sunglasses and protective clothing – a wicking layer under unisuit, e.g. T-shirt, long sleeved shirt, leggings;
- Use high SPF sun screen and lip balm to protect exposed skin; re-apply as needed to deal with loss of coverage, e.g. perspiration;
- Stay out of the sun at regattas when not rowing – stay cool and maintain hydration.

TREATMENT

- Best to prevent sunburns to avoid skin damage and an increased risk of skin cancer!