

First Aid advice for Lifeguards during the COVID 19 Pandemic

THIS ADVICE IS NOT DESIGNED FOR PATIENTS REQUIRING BASIC LIFE SUPPORT OR RESUSCITATION. SEPARATE PROTOCOLS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED BY WATER SAFETY IRELAND FOR THIS SCENARIO

Water Safety Ireland has been engaging in a significant amount of “behind the scenes” work in recent weeks to establish guidance for lifeguarding in the current global COVID 19 pandemic

Currently (as of May 2020) the prevalence of COVID 19 in the community is low. The highest risk of COVID 19 transmission to rescuers/first aiders appears to be from obviously ill patients (e.g. respiratory symptoms with fever etc). Patients such as these are unlikely to be water users or beach goers. In addition to this, lifeguards who are young, fit, healthy and not immune compromised are at a significantly lower risk of COVID 19 than other societal groups. Of course, the situation is dynamic, and throughout the summer, community prevalence and risk may change.

It is important to remember that COVID 19 can be spread via contact with droplets or aerosols through mucous membrane exposure (i.e. mouth, eyes, throat, nose). Regular hand hygiene reduces the chance of spread by preventing droplets from spreading from a person’s hand to their mouth/nose etc. **COVID 19 CANNOT be transmitted through skin contact (droplets on intact skin).**

⇒ **General First Aid advice for lifeguards**

1. Use standard PPE (e.g. gloves) as one would for all First Aid cases
2. Screen any patient for COVID 19 red flags (see box below)
 - a. If the patient screens **POSITIVE for COVID 19 risk**- the **lifeguard and patient** should both don simple **surgical masks (not the FFP 2/3 used for resuscitation)** and first aid for the main complaint continue
 - b. If the patient screens **NEGATIVE for COVID 19 risk**- first aid can continue as normal, without mask use (if First Aid will be <15 mins)
3. In addition, if a First Aid will have prolonged (> 15min), close contact (<2m) with a patient, the Lifeguard should use a **surgical mask**

⇒ **General measures should be followed for any First Aid, including;**

1. Good hand hygiene with use of soap and water or alcohol gel
2. Minimising the time spent within 2 metres of the patient (ideally less than 15 minutes)
3. Good cough etiquette for both patient and lifeguard
4. Providing First Aid in a suitable outdoor area if possible
5. Providing First Aid in a well-ventilated, open indoor area if outdoor not possible
6. Minimising the number of people present i.e. one lifeguard if possible, only the patient unless child/special needs

⇒ **SCREENING QUESTIONS FOR PATIENTS AT RISK OF COVID 19**

1. Have you any NEW cough or NEW shortness of breath?
2. Have you any fever?
3. Have you travelled overseas in the past 14 days?
4. Have you had contact with a confirmed COVID 19 case in the past 14 days?

ANY YES = POSITIVE SCREENING
ALL NO = NEGATIVE SCREENING

EXAMPLE OF SCREENING PROFORMA

Patient Name	
DOB	
Any NEW cough or NEW shortness of breath?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Any fever?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Any overseas travel in last 14 days?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Any contact with confirmed COVID 19 in past 14 days?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Other relevant information	
Name of Lifeguard providing First Aid	