Jellyfish Stings Treatment

Self-Care at Home

Care of the injured person begins immediately:

- Protect rescuers from contact with the jellyfish or jellyfish tentacles. All rescuers should consider protective clothing and gloves in order to protect themselves so they can better rescue and treat the victim.
- Remove the victim from the water.
- Rinse the affected area with salt water or don't rinse it at all. Do not rinse the involved area of skin with fresh water, because it will further activate nematocysts and worsen the reaction.
- Using protective gloves or forceps, remove any tentacles still in contact with the victim.
- Apply acetic acid 5% (white vinegar). This will inactivate undischarged nematocysts and the toxin and will help to decrease symptoms.
- Use over-the-counter pain medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) to control pain symptoms. Immobilize the area that was poisoned to prevent further spread. For example, if a foot was stung, encourage the victim to keep the area still with as little movement as possible.
- If the victim appears ill, do the following:
  - Lay the victim down.
  - If the victim begins vomiting, roll the victim onto his or her side so that the vomit is not breathed in.
  - Call for an ambulance.

Medical Treatment

Care involves general support, wound care, and pain control.

- General support
  - You may need help breathing in extreme cases (such as with a severe box jellyfish poisoning).
Your vital signs will be monitored. Low blood pressure, or shock, will initially be treated with IV fluids, followed by appropriate medications.

- Severe allergic reactions will always be considered and treated with appropriate medications.
- Serious poisonings by the box jellyfish of Australia require an antivenom. This antivenom reverses the effect of the poison and can be life saving.

**Wound care**
- The affected area will be rinsed with salt water or normal saline to inactivate the nematocysts (stingers). Fresh water will not be used because it will cause the release of more toxins.
- The area may also be rinsed with acetic acid 5% (vinegar) to inactivate undischarged nematocysts and the toxins.
- Doctors will use gloves and forceps to remove any remaining attached tentacles.

**Pain control**
- Itching is usually treated with an antihistamine, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl).
- Oral pain medicines may be given.
- The doctor may give you topical corticosteroids and oral steroids (Prednisone) if your reaction is severe.
- You may be given a tetanus booster if needed.


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