13. Appendix 3: Basic First Aid

Basic First Aid

Major injuries will usually be handled by police medics and hospitals, but it's good to know some basic First Aid for minor injuries and damage.

Before doing any First Aid, make sure to put on **gloves to protect yourself from germs**. Encourage arrestees who have been injured during arrest or in custody to make a record of the injury (eg. by taking pictures of the injuries and visiting a GP or walk-in clinic), as they may want to use this as evidence if they later bring a civil claim or complaint against the police.

- **Sprains and bruises**: Remember the acronym **RICE** – **R**est the injured area as much as possible, apply **I**ce (wrap a cold pack in some cloth and hold it against the spain/bruise), apply **C**ompression (such as with coban) and **E**levate the injured area.
- **Loss of feeling in thumbs**: Handcuffs commonly cause minor nerve damage, which can mean that arrestees feel a loss of sensation around their thumb, wrist and/or back of the hand and fingers. Reassure arrestees that this is common and usually clears up on its own, but encourage them to visit a GP or a walk-in clinic if it's still a problem after a few days.
- **Grazes**: First stop any bleeding by applying pressure to the wound using a clean and absorbent material. Then wash the wound using water (not antiseptic) and apply a sterile adhesive dressing, such as a plaster.
- **Someone is cold**: Warm them up slowly, especially if they got cold over a long or unknown period of time. If you warm someone up too fast it causes blood to rush to the extremities and can cause unconsciousness. Try to make sure they're wearing dry, warm clothes and encourage them to wrap themselves in a foil blanket. Place heat packs under their armpits and help them to move to somewhere warm and dry, if possible. Please don't give people who are very cold hot drinks – this will cause blood to rush to the stomach and can cause loss of consciousness.
- **Someone is hot**: Offer them sips of water and move to a cool, shady area. Place cold packs under their armpits. If someone is hot and stops sweating; has a throbbing headache; feels sick and is losing consciousness, these are signs of heatstroke – call an ambulance.
- **Someone is losing consciousness**: If someone is rapidly moving from **D**isoriented to **I**rritable to **C**ombative (and eventually to **C**omatose – **DICC**), this is a sign that they're losing consciousness – call an ambulance.