

Fairstead Community Primary and Nursery School – Advice for the use of Ice Packs

First Aid Response to Minor Injuries

In a busy school environment, slips, trips and falls are inevitable. The school provides trained First Aiders, and an adult presence in the playground, in order to provide an immediate response to minor injuries. Increasingly, ice-packs are expected to form part of this response. Children seek out ice-packs for any and all minor ailments, and can place a burden on school staff and resources where treatment with an ice-pack is unnecessary. This guidance seeks to take into account current advice, in order to inform school and parent judgement about where use of an ice-pack is, or is not appropriate.

Treatment with a Cold Compress/ Ice Pack

Application of a cold compress to body tissues inflamed by recent trauma is generally believed to relieve pain and reduce swelling. There is nothing to suggest that an ice-pack will resolve the cause of an injury, but it may reduce discomfort. The NHS website recommends holding an ice-pack to an injury for short periods in the first few days to reduce swelling. In such a way, the school can provide relief short-term from the pain of injuries such as mild sprains and strains by providing a child with an ice-pack.

However, treatment with an ice-pack is not always appropriate in all instances. For example, if the skin is broken and there is a risk of infection, inflammation forms part of the body's natural immune response and it may not be suitable to apply an ice-pack.

Additionally, if the incident is very minor, with no visible marks or swelling, treatment with an ice-pack may be unnecessary.

Ice packs are also associated with risks, especially where chemical ice-packs are concerned. Chemicals contained in re-useable ice packs, where they leak or burst, can cause eye irritation, redness of the skin or, if ingested, abdominal pain, stomach upset, nausea and vomiting, or diarrhoea. In light of the above, the school will continue to evaluate and respond to each First Aid event on a case-by-case basis. However, in general, treatment with an ice-pack will be provided in the following circumstances;

- A head bump or any soft-tissue injury where there is a visible mark or swelling
- A suspected sprain, strain or break
- An insect sting

Ice-packs will not generally be provided for the following;

- Minor bumps where there is no visible mark or swelling
- Old injuries where application of a cold compress would no longer be of benefit
- Where the skin is broken and there is a strong risk of introducing infection, or suppressing the body's response to infection

Where an ice-pack is not deemed necessary, the child can still be offered a paper towel soaked in cold water.