



**International
Handball
Federation**

Procedure for Handling Medical Emergencies During IHF Events

Introduction

Medical emergencies during a handball match can occur either on the field of play or in the stands. Each scenario requires a different approach to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone involved. Field of play incidents focus on the players and officials or on events happening in that area, while emergencies in the stands involve spectators and other parties. This procedure outlines the steps for effectively managing both types of situations.

1. Initial Identification

- **On the Court:**
 - Players, referees, or coaches should immediately signal to stop the match if they notice a player in distress or injured.
 - The match officials or referees must assess the situation and interrupt play immediately for any serious injury or medical emergency.
 - The event delegate has to be informed immediately in order to coordinate with the OC and the medical team all necessary measures.
- **In the Stands:**
 - OC staff must report the incident promptly to the medical team on site.
 - IHF nominees shall be informed about a potential case. In case it is close to the field of play, the IHF Event Delegate has to be informed. Further, the IHF Official needs to supervise the situation and in case the match and/or players might be concerned, he/she shall coordinate with Team Official A of both teams.
 - IHF nominees shall be made familiar with the set-up and location of medical teams/points at the venue familiarisation tour.

2. Immediate Response

- **Referee/IHF Official:**
 - Stop the match immediately and signal for medical assistance in case there is an incident on the field of play.
 - Ensure the area is cleared around the individual concerned to allow easy access for medical staff.
- **Medical Team Response:**
 - Trained medical personnel should quickly assess and stabilise the individual.
 - Must have and use emergency medical equipment such as stretchers, first aid kits, or AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators) as needed.
 - If the individual requires advanced care, initiate emergency protocols to transfer them to a hospital.

3. Crowd Management

- **Announcer Communication:**
 - The announcer should calmly inform the audience about the situation, asking for cooperation and patience.
 - Example: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are addressing a medical emergency. Please remain calm and allow the medical team to perform their duties. Thank you for your understanding."
- **Event Staff Coordination:**
 - Security and stewards must create a clear path for medical personnel to access the affected individual.
 - Ensure no obstructions hinder the medical response.

4. Match Continuation or Suspension

If the match is stopped, the following guidelines have to be applied:

- **Short Interruptions:**
 - If the medical team resolves the emergency promptly and determines it is safe to continue, the match can resume after consultation with the referees and team officials.
- **Extended Interruptions:**
 - In cases requiring prolonged medical attention or evacuation, referees, match officials, and organisers should consult on whether to suspend or postpone the match.
 - The safety of all participants and spectators must be the primary consideration.
- **Maximum Duration for Standard Procedures:**
 - These standard procedures are valid for interruptions lasting a maximum of one hour. Any interruptions exceeding this duration must be addressed on a case-by-case basis, with decisions made in consultation with relevant authorities and stakeholders. The final decision shall be taken by the IHF.
 - In case the next match is affected by the interruption of the incident, the IHF shall inform the teams concerned accordingly. Depending on the situation and the time, the teams might postpone departure from hotel. Spectators and TV have to be informed about new throw-off times.
 - Guidelines and scenarios shall be discussed between the IHF and the OC in the preparatory phase of the event to define details such as timings, logistics, etc.

5. Match Restart Procedure

- **Preparation for Restart:**
 - Referees and match officials should consult with both teams and medical personnel to determine the appropriate time to resume play.
 - Announce through the announcer the restart to all participants and spectators, ensuring everyone is informed.
- **Warm-Up Time:**
 - Allow players a warm-up period of at least 5-10 minutes to ensure they are physically and mentally ready to resume play.
 - Team officials should oversee warm-up exercises to prevent injuries.
- **Restarting Play:**
 - The match shall be resumed with the throw that corresponds to the situation at the time the match was stopped (e.g. free throw, throw-in, goalkeeper throw, etc.).

6. Communication

- **Updates:**
 - IHF media should provide updates to players, coaches, and spectators regarding the status of the affected individual, while always respecting their privacy.
 - Example: "We would like to inform you that the individual is receiving appropriate care. We appreciate your support and understanding."
- **Review and Documentation:**
 - Match officials and venue staff should document the incident, including the response timeline and actions taken.

7. Preparation and Prevention

- **Pre-Match Preparations:**
 - The Event Delegate shall ensure that all medical equipment, including AEDs, first aid kits, and stretchers, is checked and available.
 - Confirm that trained medical personnel are present and aware of their roles.
- **Training for Staff and Players:**
 - Educate referees, players, and event staff on recognising medical emergencies and the correct protocol for responding.

- Conduct periodic drills to reinforce readiness and coordination.

Key Contacts During Emergencies

- **On-Site Medical Team:** Stationed near the court with rapid access.
- **Emergency Services:** Local ambulance services should be on standby or notified promptly in severe cases.
- **Match Officials:** Responsible for communication and coordination during the incident.
- **Venue Security:** Ensure safe and efficient movement of medical personnel and equipment.
- **List to be expanded depending on hosting country and OC.**