



# Health-Safety-Welfare Pre-Existing Medical Conditions

## 1.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all clubs and operationally active members of SLSNZ.

## 2.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to minimise the risk of adverse effects or injury through the safe management of pre-existing medical conditions.

## 3.0 INTRODUCTION

SLSNZ has a responsibility to encourage safe lifeguarding practices. Lifeguards have a responsibility to protect their own safety and try to safeguard the wellbeing of beachgoers. Lifeguards with an increased risk of sudden incapacitation, including but not limited to seizure disorders, cardiac arrhythmias, or any conditions that can cause sudden incapacitation are at greatly heightened risk of drowning should an event happen while swimming. The people they are rescuing, treating, or are otherwise responsible for would therefore also be at heightened risk of harm as well.

While protecting lifeguards' safety and the safety of the beach going public are primary concerns, SLSNZ policies must not unreasonably limit affected individuals' rights to participate in SLSNZ activities. Safety must be balanced with appropriateness and accommodation when possible. Medical cases can be reviewed by medical directors on a case-by-case basis, with input from operational management and the SLSNZ Medical Director as needed.

Before affected individuals can start or resume lifeguarding duties, it will need to be established whether they are medically safe enough to perform lifeguarding duties with appropriate accommodation. Second, managerially, it must be ascertained whether the individual's requirements can be met safely within a particular surf lifesaving club.

## 4.0 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to this policy:

Operationally active staff includes all athletes, coaches, instructors, call out squads, patrolling members and surf lifeguards.

## 5.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Not Applicable

## 6.0 EXCEPTIONS

There are no exceptions to this policy.



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Surf lifesaving clubs and members are encouraged to contact the SLSNZ Health & Safety Advisor and/or SLSNZ Medical Advisor for any support or guidance.

## 7.0 POLICY

### Guidance on specific Medical Conditions:

#### Seizure Disorders:

SLSNZ members with epilepsy or other seizure disorders (one or more seizures in their lifetime, excluding febrile seizures limited to early childhood) are not allowed to perform lifeguarding duties:

- If they have had seizures ('fits', 'turns') in the last 12 months. (12-month stand-down period)
- Treatment dose or frequency has been changed or stopped and the new treatment has to be monitored for a period of time to assess its impact (3-month stand-down period)
- If they have not taken their medication to prevent seizures. (Indefinite stand-down period.)

Members with seizure disorders may be allowed to return to lifeguarding duties if:

- A 12-month seizure-free period has passed, AND they have submitted a current (within 2 months) note from their GP or neurologist giving them medical clearance to pursue lifeguarding activities.

#### Head Injuries with loss-of-consciousness or amnesia:

- If any member suffers a head injury severe enough to cause unconsciousness or amnesia, they must stop lifeguarding duties and training until a GP or neurologist has medically cleared them.

#### Cardiac Arrhythmia, Syncope (loss of consciousness), Stroke (or other cardiovascular causes of incapacitation):

- If anyone suffers a cardiac arrhythmia, loss of consciousness, stroke, or other cardiovascular cause of incapacitation, they must stop lifeguarding duties and see medical clearance from a GP or cardiologist prior to a return to duty.

#### Diabetes:

- Any lifeguard with insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus or any diabetic who has had a loss of consciousness or has had a hypoglycaemic episode must stop lifeguarding duties and seek medical clearance prior to a return to duty.
- It may be possible to perform the lifeguarding role with diabetes; each case can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.



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## 8.0 PROCEDURES

It is up to the lifeguard to declare any medical conditions that may affect their capacity to perform lifeguarding duties safely. These may be medical conditions as above or issues such as fatigue or impaired vision.

**No lifeguard may perform lifeguarding duties if they have reason to believe their capacity is diminished.**

The Medical Director and SLSNZ's goal will be to help that lifeguard resume duties safely and appropriately, if and when possible.

## 9.0 DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

<b>Policy owner</b>	National Health & Safety	<b>Date issued</b>	October 2023
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