



## Australian Dragon Boat Federation

### MEDICAL INFORMATION - Australian Dragon Boat Championships

AusDBF will **NOT** be requesting doctors' clearances for Masters (40+) paddlers for the Australian Dragon Boat Championships. Instead, a new 'Wellness Checkup' system will be implemented to protect individuals and the sport.

All paddlers, irrespective of age, are encouraged to engage in taking responsibility for their own prolonged good health and longevity as competitive or social paddlers. Regular medical checkups, blood pressure, blood tests, stress tests and muscular skeletal recovery and maintenance are all highly recommended.

The onus will be on all paddlers to declare that they have engaged in regular medical checkups over the past 12 months and to disclose that they have no known preexisting ailments that could endanger them or others while paddling. This should be viewed as a vital investment in one's health.

This change has resulted after receiving feedback on disparity in the way requested medical clearance were treated by doctors. Some doctors refused point blank to write clearances due to litigation concerns, while some wrote clearances without performing or prescribing any form of tests. Fortunately there was a great depth of sound practice in the middle ground.

While the situation was not ideal, AusDBF is aware of at least two instances whereby paddlers who sought clearances were found to have serious medical issues. These issues precluded them from participating at AusChamps and required them to undergo cardiac surgery. We are happy to report positive outcomes, the prompts made could well have resulted in preventing premature disabilities or death.

To assist you with your health and maintaining positive involvement in dragon boat racing, AusDBF has provided the below document & questionnaire penned by medical professionals who paddle and understand the sport. These documents can be used as a guide while speaking with your doctor.

Take good care of yourselves, we have but one life... If in any doubt regarding your health check it out with your doctor without delay.

Please contact AusDBF's Director of High Performance Maggie Boyce via [development@ausdbf.com.au](mailto:development@ausdbf.com.au) if you have any questions.

*Dear Paddlers,*

*At the 2012 Australian Championships in Melbourne the Dragon Boat community was devastated when an experienced paddler collapsed and died during a Senior B 500m race. The cause of death was a cardiac arrest. It is very likely that the paddler had no idea he was at risk. As a result, government authorities requested AusDBF take action to address the risks of competing in dragon boat, and identified all competitors over 40 years of age as being at a higher risk of stroke and heart attack.*

*While there are no statistics for the incidence of sudden death during dragon boat races, we know that this can occur. We also know that sudden death can occur at any age.*

*Dragon Boat racing involves a combination of frequent bursts of intense activity during 200m and 500m races, often many races per day and longer events such as the 2 km sweeps race which are often held at the end of a long day of races. Our demographic is also skewed such that we have many paddlers over the age of 35 yrs. who are competing at a high level and often backing up in races across several age categories on the same day, hence increasing the work load on their bodies.*

*Depending on the level of effort achieved during paddling a competitor's heart rate can go from resting to maximum in as little as 30 seconds. If a paddler has an underlying heart condition this sudden rise may lead to serious problems especially if the condition has not been identified.*

*We are encouraging the entire Dragon Boat community irrespective of age, fitness or experience, to have an annual Wellness Checkup to ensure that they have no unidentified cardiac condition and that they remain healthy and able to enjoy competing for many years.*

*Our recommendation is that our paddlers complete the following questionnaire prior to seeing a doctor for their consultation, have a physical examination focusing predominantly on the cardiovascular system, a Cardiovascular Risk Assessment and an annual resting 12 lead ECG*

*If you have any concerns as a result of your examination, our consultant cardiologist has recommended that the most useful additional test is a Stress ECG to Maximal Heart – i.e. to continue the test to the point of exhaustion rather than the usual Stress ECG which aims to reach 85% of age predicted maximum heart rate.*

*We wish to advise paddlers that there is no 100% guarantee that by doing an annual Wellness Check, this will prevent sudden death during or after competition. But we anticipate by adopting our proposal paddlers will significantly reduce their risk.*

<b>Please complete this questionnaire and take it with you when you visit your doctor</b>		
1	Have you ever been told you have a heart condition?	<b>Yes No</b>
2	Have you ever lost consciousness or fallen over as a result of dizziness?	<b>Yes No</b>
3	Do you have chest pain, pain in your arms, throat or jaw that is brought on by physical activity & eases with rest?	<b>Yes No</b>
4	Have you ever noticed unreasonable breathlessness with exertion?	<b>Yes No</b>
5	Have you noticed a recent drop in your fitness for no apparent reason?	<b>Yes No</b>
6	Do you exercise for more than 30 minutes three times per week to the level that makes you puff or pant?	<b>Yes No</b>
7	Have any of your immediate family i.e. Grandparents, mother, father, sister or brother ever suffered a heart attack?	<b>Yes No</b>
8	Did their first heart attack occur before the age of 55 yrs for men, 65 yrs for women?	<b>Yes No</b>
9	Do you smoke?	<b>Yes No</b>
10	Do you drink alcohol?	<b>Yes No</b>
11	Do you drink more than the recommended safe level of alcohol consumption i.e. Greater than 8 standard drinks/week for women or greater than 12 standard drinks for men?	<b>Yes No</b>
12	Do you suffer from Diabetes?	<b>Yes No</b>
13	Do you suffer from Asthma?	<b>Yes No</b>
14	Do you suffer from Epilepsy?	<b>Yes No</b>
15	Do you have any other chronic medical condition?	<b>Yes No</b>
16	Do you experience muscle, joint or ligament pain?	<b>Yes No</b>

*Thank you to Cathie Urie, Jan Frizzell, Sue Sanderson & Louise Wilson for contributions to this document.*