

One Point Advice

Crush Syndrome

クラッシュ症候群とは

In the aftermath of the huge earthquake in Kobe and Osaka a few years back, a lot of people were rescued from beneath the rubble. Unfortunately, some of the people's conditions suddenly started to worsen in the few hours after they were rescued, and some of them died. This was caused by "crush syndrome", which occurs when a limb is caught and compressed for a long period of time, and then suddenly released.

When muscles are compressed in such a manner, the muscle tissue starts to break down. The resulting materials and toxins accumulate in the blood, and when they spread throughout the body, they can cause heart or renal failure, with a high probability of death. In the Kobe earthquake, 372 people were reported to have crush syndrome, and 50 of them died.

Because there are no visible symptoms of Crush Syndrome immediately after rescue, it is often overlooked. If, over 2 hours after rescue, you feel some muscle pain, numbness, or weakness in your limbs, if you have blood in your urine or it looks tea-coloured, or if the amount of urine is a lot lower than normal, those may be signs of Crush Syndrome.

To avoid this condition, it is best to be extracted from the rubble as soon as possible. If you see someone trapped after a quake, call 119 and request an emergency team, talk to the injured person and try to keep his or her spirits up, and if possible, keep the person's body temperature from dropping with a blanket or something, and find out which body part is being squeezed. This way, when medical personnel arrive, you can give them information that could help them save that person's life.