

Basic First Aid

Toolbox Talk



GET MEDICAL ATTENTION FOR ALL INJURIES

It is very important for you to get immediate treatment for every injury, regardless of how small you may think it is. Many cases have been reported where a small, unimportant injury, such as a splinter wound or a puncture wound, quickly led to an infection, threatening the health and limb of the employee. Even the smallest scratch is large enough for dangerous germs to enter, and in large bruises or deep cuts, germs come in by the millions. Immediately examine and treat every injury.

What is first aid? It is simply those things you can do for the victim before medical help arrives.



CONTROL BLEEDING WITH PRESSURE

Bleeding is the most visible result of an injury. Each of us has between 5 and 6 quarts of blood in our body. Most people can lose a small amount of blood with no problem, but if a quart or more is quickly lost, it could lead to shock and/or death. One of the best ways to treat bleeding is to place a clean cloth on the wound and apply pressure with the palm of your hand until the bleeding stops. You should also elevate the wound above the victim's heart, if possible, to slow down the bleeding at the wound site.

Once the bleeding stops, do not try to remove the cloth that is against it, as this could disturb the blood clotting process, causing the bleeding to restart.

If the bleeding is very serious, apply pressure to the nearest major pressure point (these are located either on the inside of the upper arm between the shoulder and elbow, or in the groin area where the leg joins the body).

Direct pressure is better than using a pressure point or a tourniquet because direct pressure stops blood circulation only at the wound. Only use the pressure points if elevation and direct pressure haven't controlled the bleeding.

Never use a tourniquet (a device, such as a bandage twisted tightly with a stick) to control the flow of blood except in response to an extreme emergency, such as a severed arm or leg. Tourniquets can damage nerves and blood vessels and can cause the victim to lose an arm or leg.



TREAT PHYSICAL SHOCK QUICKLY

Shock occurs when the body's important functions are threatened by not getting enough blood, or when the major organs and tissues don't receive enough oxygen. When not treated quickly, shock can threaten the life of a victim, even if the injury doesn't directly cause death.

Some of the symptoms of shock are:

- A pale or bluish skin color that is cold to the touch

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- Vomiting
- Dull and sunken eyes
- Unusual thirst

Shock requires medical treatment to be reversed, so all you can do is prevent it from getting worse. You can maintain an open airway for breathing, control any obvious bleeding, and elevate the legs about 12 inches, unless an injury makes it impossible. You can also prevent the loss of body heat by covering the victim (over and under) with blankets. Don't give the victim anything to eat or drink, as this may cause vomiting. Generally, keep the victim lying flat on their back. However, a victim who is unconscious, or bleeding from the mouth, should lie on one side so breathing is easier. Stay with the victim until medical help arrives.



UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, DO NOT MOVE THE INJURED PERSON

Never move an injured person unless there is a fire or when explosives are involved. The major concern with moving an injured person is making the injury worse, which is especially true with spinal cord injuries. If you must move an injured person, try to drag them by the clothing around the neck or shoulder area. If possible, first drag them onto a blanket or large cloth, then drag the blanket to relocate them.



PERFORM THE HEIMLICH MANEUVER ON CHOKING VICTIMS

Ask the victim to cough, speak, or breathe. If the victim can do none of these things, stand behind the victim and locate the bottom rib with your hand. Move your hand across the abdomen to the area above the navel, then make a fist and place your thumb side on the stomach. Place your other hand over your fist and press into the victim's stomach with a quick, upward thrust until the item is dislodged.



PROPERLY TREAT BURNS IMMEDIATELY

There are many different types of burns; thermal, chemical, electrical, radiation. Each of these occur in different ways and each requires immediate treatment. The type of burn and degree of the burn determines treatment.

Burns are classified in three different degrees:

- First degree burns produce redness, mild swelling, and pain.
- Second degree burns produce redness, swelling, blisters, and extreme pain.

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- Third degree burns are the most destructive: they produce a charred black or white dry appearance with little pain. The lack of pain is because all the skin cells and nerves, including the tissues beneath, have been burned.

For first and second degree thermal, radiation, and chemical burns, the first step is to run cool water over the burn for a minimum of 30 minutes. If the burn is small enough, keep it completely underwater. While flushing the burn, remove all affected clothing, except any clothing stuck to the burn. Carefully cut the clothing around the burn, leaving the stuck fabric in place. Flushing the burn takes priority over calling for help with first and second-degree burns. Next, cover the burn with a clean, cotton material and get medical attention.

For a third degree thermal, radiation, or chemical burn, call for medical help immediately. Next, before the burn has a chance to swell, remove any jewelry and clothing. If the burn is chemical, flush it with cool water for 30 minutes, or until medical help arrives. If the burn is thermal, wrap it in a clean, cool, wet or damp cotton cloth; if a cloth is not available, soak the burn in cool water. This will help to bring the body temperature back down to normal. Once soaked, wrap the burn in a clean, loose, dry cotton cloth.

In these cases, also be sure to treat the victim for shock and try to help the victim maintain a normal body temperature until medical help arrives. Use a blanket to warm them up, or cool water or damp cloths to cool them down. Keep a constant check on breathing and heart rate and perform CPR or rescue breathing if necessary.

If you do not have clean, cotton material, don't cover the burn with anything. Don't scrub the burn, and don't apply anything such as ice, soap, ointment, or home remedies. Don't offer the victim anything to eat or drink.

Electrical burn treatments are a little different. First, do not touch a victim who has been in contact with electricity unless you and the victim are clear of the power source. Regardless of the degree of the burn, your first task is to check for any airway obstruction and make sure the breathing and circulation is normal. Administer CPR if necessary. Once the victim is stable, wrap the burn in a clean, loose, dry cotton cloth or bandage; if none is available, then disregard this step. Don't move the victim, and don't scrub the burns or apply any soap, ointment, or home remedies. Treat the victim for shock, keep them warm, and elevate their feet until medical help arrives.



USE COOL TREATMENT FOR HEAT EXHAUSTION OR STROKE

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are two different things, although they are commonly confused as the same condition.

Heat exhaustion can occur anywhere there is poor air circulation, such as around an open furnace or heavy machinery, or even if the person is poorly adjusted to very warm temperatures. The body reacts by increasing the heart rate and strengthening blood circulation. Simple heat exhaustion can occur due to loss of body fluids and salts. The symptoms are usually:

Source: Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation

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- Excessive fatigue
- Dizziness
- Disorientation
- Normal skin temperature, but a damp and clammy feeling

To treat heat exhaustion, move the victim to a cool spot and encourage rest and drinking of cool water.

Heat stroke is much more serious and occurs when the body's sweat glands have shut down. Some symptoms of heat stroke are:

- Mental confusion
- Collapse
- Unconsciousness
- Fever
- Dry, mottled skin

A heat stroke victim will die quickly so don't wait for medical help to arrive – assist immediately! The first thing you can do is move the victim to a cool place out of the sun and begin pouring cool water over them. Fan the victim to provide good air circulation until medical help arrives.



RESPOND APPROPRIATELY TO POISONING

When a victim is poisoned, the first thing to do is to get them away from the source of the poison, then provide medical treatment appropriate to the form of the poisoning.

If the poison is in solid form, such as pills, remove it from the victim's mouth using a clean cloth wrapped around your finger. However, don't try

this with infants because it could force the poison further down their throat.

If the poison is gas, you may need a respirator to protect yourself. After checking the area first for your safety, remove the victim from the area and take them to fresh air.

If the poison is corrosive to the skin, remove the clothing from the affected area and flush it with water for 30 minutes.

If the poison is in contact with the eyes, flush the victim's eyes with clean water for a minimum of 15 minutes.

Take the poison container or label with you when you call for medical help because you will need to be able to answer questions about the poison. Try to stay calm and follow the instructions you are given.



KEEP A FIRST AID KIT CHECKLIST

To administer effective first aid, it is important to maintain adequate supplies in each first aid kit. First aid kits can be purchased commercially and already stocked with supplies, or one can be made by including the following items:

- Adhesive bandages: available in a large range of sizes, for minor cuts, abrasions, and puncture wounds.
- Butterfly closures: to hold wound edges together.
- Rolled gauze: these allow freedom of movement, are recommended for securing the dressing and/or pads, and are especially good for hard-to-bandage wounds.

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- Nonstick sterile pads: soft, super absorbent pads that provide a good environment for wound healing, recommended for bleeding and draining wounds, burns, and infections.
- First aid tapes: various sizes and various materials; adhesives are waterproof and extra strong for times when rigid strapping is needed, clear stretches with the body's movement and is good for visible wounds, cloth is recommended for most first aid taping needs (including heavy dressings) because it's less irritating than adhesive, and paper is recommended for sensitive skin and best used on light and frequently changed dressings.
- Other items: tweezers, first aid cream, thermometer, analgesic or equivalent, ice pack.

REPORT ALL INJURIES TO A SUPERVISOR

As with getting medical attention for all injuries, it is equally important that you report all injuries to your supervisor. It is critical that the employer check into causes of every job-related injury, regardless of how minor, to find out exactly what happened, as there may be unsafe procedures or unsafe equipment that should be corrected.

