

First Aid – Severe Bleeding

Toolbox Talk

Worksite emergencies can happen quickly, and everyone should know what to do – everyone should know first aid. *Note: You may want to demonstrate the steps for controlling bleeding on a volunteer.*

To care for a major open wound (bleeding freely or severely), you must act at once:

Begin by applying direct pressure over the wound with a clean, sterile dressing to slow the flow of blood and promote clotting. If a sterile dressing is not available, use any clean cloth such as a towel, handkerchief, or shirt. To reduce the risk of infection or disease transmission, avoid using your bare hands and put a barrier between you and the victim's blood, such as disposable gloves or a layer of plastic wrap.

Next, if you do not suspect that the wound involves a broken bone, elevate the injured area above the level of the heart. Elevating the wound will help to slow the flow of blood. Remember to maintain direct pressure on the wound at all times, or it may begin to bleed again. If the victim can help, have him or her apply the pressure.

Use a roll of gauze bandage to wrap snugly around the dressing to keep pressure on the wound. Wrap the bandage around the injured part of the body, using overlapping turns, covering the entire dressing. The bandage should be tight, but not so tight that it restricts all circulation beyond the bandage. If blood soaks through the bandage, put on more dressing and bandages, do not remove blood soaked ones.

If the bleeding cannot be controlled, apply pressure to a nearby artery, called a pressure point (a spot on the body where you can squeeze the artery against the bone). This can slow the flow of blood to the wound. There are two major pressure points in the body, the femoral artery and the brachial artery. If the

bleeding is from the leg, press with the heel of one hand on the femoral artery in the groin – where the leg bends at the hip. If the bleeding is from the arm, squeeze the brachial artery located on the inside of the upper arm.

Any severe bleeding can lead to a life-threatening condition called shock. Shock is a condition in which the circulatory systems fails to deliver blood to all parts of the body. When shock occurs, the victim may become restless or irritable, experience rapid breathing or pulse rate, have pale, cool, or moist skin, or drift in and out of consciousness.

To care for a victim of shock:

- Have them lie down or rest comfortably
- Elevate the legs about twelve inches if you do not suspect a head, neck, or back injury
- Maintain a normal body temperature by covering with a blanket, but do not overheat
- Do not give them anything to eat or drink, even though they are likely to be thirsty
- Call your local emergency number immediately – a victim of shock requires advanced medical care as quickly as possible. Call for professional medical help quickly with any severe bleeding emergency. Always wash your hands immediately after completing care, disinfect any blood-contaminated surfaces, and dispose of blood-soaked bandages properly. Never apply a tourniquet unless you have been medically trained to do so.

To review, the steps for controlling severe bleeding are:

- Apply direct pressure, elevate the wound (if no broken bones are involved)
- Apply a pressure bandage, use a pressure point
- Treat for shock

