

Chapter Three

Medical Emergencies

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1- Breathing Problems

In this section we'll cover

- General Breathing Problems
- Assembling and Using an Inhaler
- How to Help Someone with Breathing Problems

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- **General Breathing Problems**

Someone may develop mild or severe blockage of the air passages. Someone having a heart attack, having a stroke, or experiencing certain injuries may also have breathing problems.

Signs: You can tell if someone is having trouble breathing if the person

- ✓ Is breathing very fast or very slowly.
- ✓ Is having trouble with every breath.
- ✓ Has noisy breathing—you hear a sound or whistle as the air enters or leaves the lungs.
- ✓ Can only make sounds or speak no more than a few words at a time in between breaths, although the person is trying to say more.

Many people with medical conditions, such as asthma, know about their conditions and carry inhaler medicine that can make them feel better within minutes of using it.

Sometimes people have so much trouble breathing they need help using their inhalers. You may need to help them.

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- **Assembling and Using an Inhaler**

Inhalers are made up of 2 parts: the medicine chamber and the mouthpiece. A spacer can be attached that makes it easier for the person with the breathing problem to inhale all the medicine.

When someone has trouble breathing, she may panic. For this reason, you should be ready to assemble the inhaler and help her use it.

- How to Help Someone with Breathing Problems

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2- choking in an Adult

Choking is when food or another object gets stuck in the airway in the throat. The object stops air from getting to the lungs.

Some choking is mild, and some is severe. If it's severe, act fast. Get the object out so the person can breathe.

In this section we'll cover

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➤ Mild vs Severe Choking

Use the following table to figure out if someone has mild or severe choking and what you should do:

The Choking Sign: If someone is choking, he might use the choking sign (holding the neck with one or both hands).

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➤ How to Help a Choking Adult

When someone has severe choking, give thrusts slightly above the belly button. These thrusts are sometimes called the Heimlich maneuver. Like a cough, each thrust pushes air from the lungs. This can help remove an object that is blocking the airway.

Action Help to a Choking Adult: Follow these steps:

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- **How to Help a Choking Adult Who Stops Responding**

If you give someone thrusts but can't remove the object blocking the airway, the person will stop responding.

If the person stops responding, follow these steps:

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3- Heart Attack

In this section we'll cover how to recognize and provide first aid for heart attacks.

Heart disease is the single biggest cause of death in the United States. The first minutes of a heart attack are the most important. This is when the person is likely to get worse and may die. Also many of the treatments for heart attack will be most successful if they are given quickly.

Signs of a heart attack:

- ✓ **Chest discomfort:** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain. If someone has an uncomfortable feeling in the chest, think heart attack.
- ✓ **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body:** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or abdomen.
- ✓ **Shortness of breath:** This may occur with or without chest discomfort.
- ✓ **Other signs:** This may include cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

Signs in Women, the Elderly, and Diabetics:

Women, the elderly, and people with diabetes are more likely to have the less typical signs of a heart attack, such as an ache in the chest, heartburn, or indigestion. They may have an uncomfortable feeling in the back, jaw, neck, or shoulder. They may also complain of shortness of breath or have nausea or vomiting.

Actions: Follow these steps if someone has any of the signs of a possible heart attack:

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4- Fainting

In this section we'll cover what fainting is and how to provide first aid for it.

Fainting is a short period when a person stops responding for less than a minute and then seems fine. This is usually caused by not enough blood going to the brain. Seconds before fainting, he may feel dizzy.

Fainting often occurs when the person:

- ✓ Stands without moving for a long time, especially if the weather is hot.
 - ✓ Has a heart condition.
 - ✓ Suddenly stands after squatting or bending down.
 - ✓ Receives bad news
- Actions: Follow these steps.

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(A)- if a person is dizzy but still responds:

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(B)- If a person faints and then starts to respond:

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5- Allergic Reinting

In this section we'll cover

- ✓ Using Epinephrine Pens
- ✓ Mild vs Severe Allergic Reactions

Many allergic reactions are mild. Some reactions that seem mild can become severe within minutes. People can be allergic to many things, including:

- ✓ Many foods, such as eggs, nuts, chocolate
- ✓ Insect stings or bites, especially bee or wasp stings

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- **Using Epinephrine Pens (*Skill You Will Demonstrate)**

An epinephrine pen will help someone with a severe allergic reaction breathe more easily. It contains a small amount of medicine that can be injected through clothing. It usually takes several minutes before the medicine starts to work. The epinephrine injection is given in the side of the thigh.

Actions for an Epinephrine Pen

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- **Mild vs Severe Allergic Reactions:**

Many allergic reactions are mild. Some reactions that seem mild can become severe within minutes.

Signs: The following table shows signs of mild and severe allergic reactions:

Actions for Severe Allergic Reactions: A severe allergic reaction can be life threatening. Follow these steps if you see signs of a severe allergic reaction:

Important: It's important to dispose of needles correctly so that no one gets stuck. Follow your institution's sharps disposal policy. If you don't know what to do, give the needle to someone with more advanced training than you have.

6- diabetic and Low Blood Sugar

In this section we'll cover how to recognize and provide first aid for low blood sugar in a person with diabetes.

Diabetes is a disease that affects levels of sugar in the blood. Too much or too little sugar causes problems. In this course, we're going to address low blood sugar, which can cause someone's behavior to change. Some diabetics take insulin. Too much insulin can also cause low blood sugar.

Low blood sugar can occur if a person with diabetes has:

- ✓ Not eaten or is vomiting.
- ✓ Not eaten enough food for the level of activity
- ✓ Injected too much insulin.

Signs of low blood sugar can appear quickly and may include:

- ✓ A change in behavior, such as confusion or irritability
- ✓ Sleepiness or not responding.
- ✓ Hunger, thirst, or weakness.
- ✓ Sweating, pale skin color.
- ✓ A seizure (see the section on seizures)

Action: Follow these steps if someone is responding and shows signs of low blood sugar:

The following list shows what to give a person with diabetes who has low blood sugar. Give foods that contain sugar, such as

- ✓ Fruit juice
- ✓ Milk
- ✓ Sugar
- ✓ Honey
- ✓ A regular soft drink

It's important to make sure that whatever you give has sugar in it. Diet foods and drinks don't have sugar; chocolate doesn't have enough sugar.

Important: If someone with low blood sugar is unable to sit up and swallow, don't give him anything to eat or drink.

7- Stroke

Definitions: Strokes occur when blood stops flowing to a part of the brain. This can happen if there is bleeding or a blocked blood vessel in the brain. The signs of a stroke are usually very sudden.

New treatments can reduce the damage from a stroke and improve recovery. However, they must be given within the first hours after the first signs of stroke appear. As a result, it's important to recognize the signs of a stroke quickly and get medical care fast.

Signs: The warning signs of stroke are

- ✓ Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one
- ✓ side of the body
- ✓ Sudden confusion, trouble speaking, or trouble understanding
- ✓ Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- ✓ Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- ✓ Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Actions: Follow these steps if you think someone is having a stroke:

7- Shock

Definitions: Shock develops when there is not enough blood flowing to the cells of the body. Someone with shock may stop responding. In adults shock is most often present if someone

- ✓ Loses a lot of blood that you may or may not be able to see
- ✓ Has a severe heart attack
- ✓ Has a severe allergic reaction

Signs: A person in shock may

- ✓ Feel weak, faint, or dizzy.
- ✓ Feel nauseous or thirsty.
- ✓ Have pale or grayish skin.
- ✓ Act restless, agitated, or confused.
- ✓ Be cold and clammy to the touch.

Actions: