

## B.3 DROWNING

Drowning causes asphyxia by water, weeds and mud entering into the lungs. When the lungs' alveoli are filled with water, they cannot exchange oxygen to and from the blood.

In case of 'dry drowning' the water never reaches the lungs. Instead, breathing in water causes the vocal cords spasm that shuts off his airways, making it hard to breathe.

'Secondary drowning' happens differently. The swimmer often appears fine immediately after swimming. But over time, water left in the swimmer's lungs begins to cause oedema, or swelling.



If a casualty has been immersed in cold water, there is also the danger of hypothermia. It is important to keep the victim warm.  
If the casualty was diving there could be trauma to the head, neck or spine.

### B.3.1 WHAT DO I SEE AND ENQUIRE?



- A victim is in the water and is in distress.
- Following signs of drowning may be observed:
  - no breathing;
  - difficulty in breathing and signs of restlessness;
  - the rate of breathing increases;
  - the breaths get shorter;
  - the veins of the neck become swollen;
  - the face, lips, nails, fingers and toes turn blue;
  - the pulse gets faster and feebler; and
  - water may gush from the mouth.



This water is from the stomach and should be left to drain of its own accord. Do not attempt to force the water to come out of the stomach as the victim may inhale it.

## **B.3.2 WHAT DO I DO?**

### **B.3.2.1 SAFETY FIRST AND CALL FOR HELP**

1. Make sure there is no danger to you or of drowning.
2. The person urgently needs help. Shout or call for help if you are alone but do not leave the person unattended. Ask a bystander to seek help or to arrange urgent transport to the nearest healthcare facility. Tell him to come back to you to confirm if help has been secured.

### **B.3.3 REMOVE THE VICTIM OUT OF THE WATER**



3. Remove the person rapidly and safely from the water, but do not place yourself into any danger by doing so.
4. Try to throw a rope or something that the drowning person can hold onto (if he is still conscious and able to grasp the helpline).
5. Once the person has been rescued from the water, do not try to remove water from his lungs.

#### **B.3.3.1.1 WHAT DO I DO IF THE VICTIM IS BREATHING?**

1. If the person is breathing, put him in the recovery position and cover him with a blanket or coat to keep him warm.
2. Do not leave the victim alone and continue to observe him.

#### **B.3.3.1.2 WHAT DO I DO IF THE VICTIM IS NOT BREATHING OR NOT BREATHING NORMALLY?**

1. Remove any cause of suffocation.
2. If the person is not on his back, turn him on his back.
3. Kneel down by the side of the person.
4. Start CPR.

Do not interrupt the resuscitation until:

- the victim starts to wake up, moves, opens eyes and breathes normally;
- help (trained in CPR) arrives and takes over;
- you become too exhausted to continue; or
- the scene becomes unsafe for you to continue.

If the breathing starts again:

- a. Cover the victim.
- b. Arrange urgent transport to a hospital.
- c. Do not leave the victim alone and continue to observe him.
- d. If the breathing stops again, restart CPR.

#### **B.3.3.2    *HYGIENE***

Always wash your hands after taking care of a person. Use soap and water to wash your hands. If no soap is available, you can use ash to wash your hands. Alcohol-based sanitizers can also be used, if available.

#### **B.3.4    WHEN TO REFER A DROWNING VICTIM TO A HEALTHCARE FACILITY?**



Always urgently transport people who have been in a drowning situation to a healthcare facility.

## **B.4 STRANGULATION AND HANGING**

The airway is squeezed if pressure is exerted on the outside of the neck and by such act the flow of air into the lungs is cut off.

Strangulation is a constriction or squeezing around the neck or throat. Hanging is the suspension of the body by a noose around the neck. Hanging or strangulation may occur accidentally - for example, by ties or clothing becoming caught in machinery.



Hanging may cause a broken neck. For this reason the casualty must be handled extremely carefully.

### **B.4.1 WHAT DO I DO?**

#### **B.4.1.1 SAFETY FIRST AND CALL FOR HELP**

1. Make sure there is no danger to you.
2. The person urgently needs help. Shout or call for help if you are alone but do not leave the person unattended. Ask a bystander to seek help or to arrange urgent transport to the nearest healthcare facility. Tell him to come back to you to confirm if help has been secured.



3. Cut or remove the band constricting the throat.  
If the victim is suspended, raise the body and loosen or cut the rope.
4. Lay the person on the ground.  
Be careful while moving the victim as he may suffer neck injuries.

#### **B.4.1.2 WHAT DO I DO IF THE VICTIM IS BREATHING?**

1. If the person is breathing, put him in the recovery position and cover him with a blanket or coat to keep him warm.
2. Do not leave the victim alone and continue to observe him.

#### **B.4.1.3 WHAT DO I DO IF THE VICTIM IS NOT BREATHING OR NOT BREATHING NORMALLY?**

1. Remove any cause of suffocation, but do not place yourself into any danger doing so.
2. If the person is not on his back, turn him on his back.
3. Kneel down by the side of the person.

#### 4. Start CPR

Do not interrupt the resuscitation until:

- the victim starts to wake up, moves, opens eyes and breathes normally;
- help (trained in CPR) arrives and takes over;
- you are too exhausted to continue; or
- the scene becomes unsafe for you to continue.

If the breathing starts again:

- a. Cover the victim to keep him warm.
- b. Arrange urgent transport to a hospital.
- c. Do not leave the victim alone and continue to observe him.
- d. If the breathing stops again, restart CPR.

##### **B.4.1.4    HYGIENE**

Always wash your hands after taking care of a person. Use soap and water to wash your hands. If no soap is available, you can use ash to wash your hands. Alcohol-based sanitizers can also be used, if available.



Do not wait for the police to arrive, but give first aid immediately.  
Do not interfere or destroy any material or evidence.

##### **B.4.2    WHEN TO REFER A VICTIM OF STRANGULATION OR HANGING TO A HEALTHCARE FACILITY?**



Always urgently transport victims of a strangulation or hanging to a healthcare facility.