# First Aid/ Shock

# Introduction

## Shock is a range of related medical conditions where the delivery of oxygen and nutrients is insufficient to meet the body's needs. The main carrier of oxygen and nutrients in the body is the blood, so most causes are related to the blood, with the most common first aid consideration being loss of blood. Shock is a life-threatening emergency, it should not be confused with a feeling of extreme surprise - one does not lead to the other.

# Key types of shock

## • Hypovolaemic shock - This is caused by the loss of blood from the circulatory system (not necessarily from the body, as it may be the result of internal bleeding)

## • Cardiogenic shock - This is where the blood is not pumping effectively through the body - usually caused by heart problems, such as a heart attack

## • Anaphylactic shock - Caused by an allergic reaction that causes air passages to swell, blocking the flow of oxygen, and causing a lack of oxygen in the blood

# Recognition

## Signs of shock can range greatly, some common signs are:

# Early Phases

## • A rapid pulse

## • Pale, cold, clammy skin

## • Sweating

# Developing phase

## • Cyanosis - Grey/blue skin, especially in areas such as the lips. Sometimes known as 'bluing'

## • Weakness and dizziness

## • Nausea and possibly vomiting

## • Thirst

## • Rapid, shallow breathing

## • Weak, 'thready' pulse

# Advanced phases

## • Absence of pulse from the wrist (radial)

## • Restlessness and aggressiveness

## • Yawning and gasping for air

## • Unconsciousness

# Final phase

## • Cardiac arrest

# Treatment

## The most important treatment for shock of any variety is to try and maintain the blood flow to the body's core (thorax and head). To do this, lie the patient flat on the floor and raise their legs about 6-12 inches (15-30cm) off the ground.

## Other important factors in the treatment of shock can be remembered by the simple mnemonic WART:

## Warmth

## ABCs (Airway, Breathing, Circulation.)

## Rest & Reassurance

## Treatment of underlying cause

# Unconscious patients

## Should a patient become unconscious, call for an ambulance and take the following steps:

## • Assess ABCs. Should any change occur, compensate with required treatment. (ex. Patient goes into cardiac arrest, begin CPR.)

## • As airway takes priority over other treatment, you should place them in the recovery position in order to ensure a patent airway.