First Aid Notes

PGS

2025-02-13

Contents

Shock

Any medical condition or injury can lead to shock. Shock is brought on by low circulating blood volume. Patient will have lowered blood pressure.

Signs and symptoms

- *Initial signs*
  - pale face, lips or fingernails
  - feeling faint or dizzy
  - cool, moist, sweaty skin
  - nausea
  - anxiety
- *Severe shock:*

  - feeling agitated
  - feeling thirsty
  - weak, rapid pulse
  - shallow, fast breathing
  - capillary refill more than 2 sec
  - blue face, earlobes, lips or fingernails (patient is very sick!)
  - decreasing level of consciousness

Treatment

- DRSABCD
- Help the patient lie down. Do not raise their legs.
- Reassure them.
- Manage severe bleeding, if any, then other injuries.
- Loosen tight clothing.
- Keep them warm using a blanket.
- Give them small amounts of cool water (if they're conscious, don't have abdominal injuries and won't need an operation soon).
- If they have difficulty breathing, put them in the recovery position.

Heat-induced illness

The aim is to cool down and rehydrate the patient.

If they don't improve within 10 minutes, call an ambulance.

Signs and symptoms

- patient is hot, breathless and sweaty (or dry - worse!)
- they can't continue their activity - they feel too weak
- high body temperature
- feeling faint or dizzy
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea
- pale skin and signs of shock setting in
- weak, rapid pulse
- feeling unsteady on their feet
- decreasing level of consciousness

Treatment

- Help patient to lie down in a cool, shaded area.
- Remove as much of their clothing as possible.
- Soak them with water.
- Apply ice packs to neck, armpits, groin.
- Fan them continuously.
- Keep spraying them with water or wiping them with a wet cloth.

Swelling and cramps

Hot conditions may result in the body becoming temporarily overheated. This can lead to heat-induced swelling of hands or feet.

Losing too much water and salt through sweating can cause heat cramps, especially in the legs and abdomen.

Treatment

Swelling

- Raise the affected limb.
- Get the patient to exercise it.
- Keep them cool.

Cramps

- Get the patient to stop and rest.
- Gently stretch the muscle that's affected.
- Massage the muscle if it helps reduce pain.
- Apply a cold pack.
- Get the patient to drink some water.

Wounds and Dressings

Wound types

Type	Description	Cause
Bruise	Visible discolouration on skin, with pain and swelling	Blow from something blunt
Incision or cut	Straight cut with edges that come together	Sharp object
Laceration	Wound with ragged edge, edges may not come together	Sharp, possibly jagged objects
Graze	Superficial scraping of skin, may have dirt in it	Scraping across a hard surface
Abrasion	Superficial or deep (possibly with pits) scraping of skin, may have dirt in it	Scraping across a hard surface
Skin tear	Wound with ragged edge	Severe force or thin, fragile skin

Dressings

Dressings can

- absorb blood and other fluids
- keep a wound clean
- help protect a wound from infection
- protect a wound from bumps and scrapes
- reduce pain

What dressings to use

Dry dressings

- cuts and lacerations

- closed blisters (with no skin loss)
- punctures

Moist (non-adherent) dressings

- grazes and abrasions
- open blisters (with skin loss)
- skin tears
- burns

Adhesive dressings

- minor wounds

Combine dressing

- large or deep wounds

Alcohol and drugs

Users' own reports about their drug use are unreliable!

Record what they say, treat what you find!

Broad groups

Substances that slow patients down - depressants

Signs and symptoms

- reduced pulse rate
- reduced blood pressure
- reduced level of consciousness
- usually also reduced respiration rate and respiration volume
- this general reduction in vital signs leads to reduced movement, resulting in *reduced temperature*

Treatment

- Maintain the patient's airway and ventilation (usually with a bag valve mask (BVM) resuscitator - picture below).

Examples

- alcohol
- cannabis
- barbiturates (and other sleeping tablets)
- benzodiazepines (and other tranquilisers)
- narcotics (e.g. heroin)
- volatile substances (e.g. petrol, thinners)

Alcohol - snippets

- Being drunk slows down the brain's ability to trigger a gag reflex, which prevents choking, so a drunk person may inhale vomit into their lungs.
- Keep them as upright as possible - never lay them down. If they can't sit up, put them into the recovery position.
- Alcohol is a diuretic. It also causes the stomach to produce more acid than usual, which may cause stomach ache, diarrhoea or vomiting. Give them an open bottle of water so they can *sip* when they want or rinse out their mouth - don't give them acidic drinks like fruit juice.
- Alcohol can cause a drop in body temperature, so keep them warm if they're cold.
- Don't leave them alone - particularly if they're vomiting. Monitor them.

Substances that speed people up - stimulants

Signs and symptoms

- increased pulse rate
- increased blood pressure
- increased level of consciousness
- usually also increased respiratory rate and respiratory volume
- this general increase in vital signs leads to increased movement, resulting in *increased temperature*
- sweating
- confusion and inability to answer simple questions

Treatment

- Reduce stimuli affecting the patient (i.e. move them away from loud music to a quiet place with no bright lights) to help *bring their temperature down* into the normal range (reducing stimuli and agitation is always the most effective way to reduce temperature).
- To reduce temperature, you may also need to
  - give them small amounts of water - give them an open bottle and say, "Sip when you need to"
  - remove clothing
  - keep the environment cool
- Stay with them - don't leave them alone - and monitor them.

Examples

- amphetamines
- cocaine
- ecstasy (i.e. MDMA or methylenedioxymethamphetamine - similar structure to methamphetamine (speed))

Notes

- The effect of stimulants is similar to a state of fright. Blood is moved to the muscles to prepare for running away, pupils dilate so the person can see better. Maintaining this state of fright requires energy - the body uses up available energy stores (glucose) and *body temperature increases*.
- MDMA affects how the body regulates temperature and the body may not respond to warning signals from the brain about it overheating, so the person may not realise their body temperature is becoming too high.