

Treatment and Interventions

1. Address life-threatening issues
2. Remove the patient to a safe place even if no medical indication for transport
3. Report concerns about potential abuse/maltreatment to law enforcement immediately, in accordance with state law, including:
 - a. Caregivers impeding your ability to assess/transport patient
 - b. Caregivers refusing care for the patient
4. For patients transported, report concerns to hospital and/or law enforcement personnel (including Child Protective Services agencies where appropriate) per mandatory reporting laws

Patient Safety Considerations

1. If no medical emergency exists, the next priority is safe patient disposition/removal from the potentially abusive situation
2. Do not confront suspected perpetrators of abuse/maltreatment. This can create an unsafe situation for EMS and for the patient
3. In situations of parental or religious objections to life-saving medical care when EMS suspects abuse, law enforcement should be notified for assistance

Notes/Educational Pearls

Key Considerations

1. All states have specific mandatory reporting laws that dictate which specific crimes such as suspected abuse or maltreatment must be reported and to whom they must be reported. It is important to be familiar with the specific laws in your state including specifically who must make disclosures, what the thresholds are for disclosures, and to whom the disclosures must be made
2. Clues to abuse or maltreatment can vary depending on the age group of the patient and on the nature of the abuse. Remember that not all abuse or maltreatment involves physical harm. EMS clinicians are often unique in being the only members of the medical team to observe the home environment or injury scene. It is important to realize that the job of EMS is to document their concerns, assess the patient for potentially serious injuries, make sure that their concerns are disclosed to the appropriate legal authorities, and work towards getting the patient into a safe situation. EMS personnel should not take it upon themselves to investigate, interview, or intervene above and beyond those concepts and should leave further intervention to the appropriate law enforcement personnel
3. Abuse and maltreatment can happen to patients of all ages
4. Patients may be unwilling or unable to disclose abuse or maltreatment, so the responsibility falls on EMS personnel to assess the situation, document appropriately, and take appropriate action to secure a safe place for the patient
5. Document findings by describing what you see and not ascribing possible causes (e.g., "0.5-inch round burn to back" as opposed to "burn consistent with cigarette burn")

Pertinent Assessment Findings

As noted above