



PROCEDURES PROC-08

HELMET REMOVAL

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General:

- In the event that an individual is injured while wearing a protective helmet, the primary assessment should proceed as always with concern for assessing airway, breathing and circulation while addressing the potential for cervical spine injury.
- The goal is to appropriately treat the patient in terms of cervical spine immobilization and manage the patient's airway.

Procedure:

- The decision whether to remove a helmet or not to remove a helmet should be based on the following criteria:
 - Tight-Fitting Helmets:
 - If the patient is awake and able to protect his/her airway, it is generally preferable to leave the helmet in place using the helmet to assist with immobilization.
 - If the airway cannot be controlled for any reason with the helmet in place, the helmet should immediately be removed while maintaining in-line immobilization.
 - If the patient has an altered level of consciousness and/or is unable to protect his/her airway. The face shield should be immediately removed to allow access to the airway. If the face shield cannot easily be removed, the helmet should be removed while maintaining in-line immobilization.
 - Loose-Fitting Helmets:
 - If the patient is wearing a loose helmet that does not conform closely to his/her head, the helmet should be removed using in-line immobilization prior to completing spinal immobilization on the patient.
 - The void behind the Occiput created by the helmet and any other protective sports equipment should be filled during the spinal immobilization procedure

Considerations:

- When immobilizing patients with the helmet in place, the backboard portion of most immobilization devices may cause the neck to flex forward when the patient's head is placed on it. For that reason, head immobilization devices should generally not be used in these patients. The helmet should rest directly on the backboard with towel rolls used to provide lateral support to the helmet.
- EMS crews should work closely with team trainers and physicians for organized team sports. When providing scheduled standbys at sporting events, EMS personnel should introduce themselves to the sports medicine personnel of the teams prior to the game.