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Focused Updates and Guidelines  
2020 Version

# Advanced Life Support

Participant's Manual



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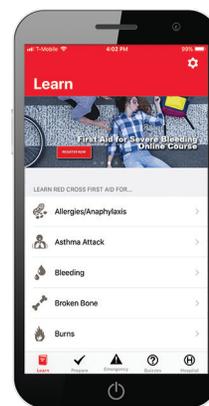
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**American Red Cross**  
Training Services

# Advanced Life Support

Participant's Manual



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## Science and Technical Content

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The scientific content and evidence within the American Red Cross Advanced Life Support program is consistent with the American Red Cross Focused Updates and Guidelines 2020 and the most current science and treatment recommendations from:

- The International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (ILCOR)
- The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- The Policy Statements, Evidence Reviews and Guidelines of:
  - American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
  - American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)
  - American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG)
  - American College of Surgeons (ACS)
  - Committee on Tactical Combat Casualty Care (CoTCCC)
  - Obstetric Life Support™ (OBLSTM)
  - Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCM) and the American College of Critical Care Medicine (ACCM)
  - Surviving Sepsis Campaign (SSC)

Guidance for this course was provided by the Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council, a panel of 60+ nationally and internationally recognized experts from a variety of medical, nursing, EMS, advanced practice, allied health, scientific, educational and academic disciplines. Members of the Scientific Advisory Council have a broad range of professional specialties including resuscitation, emergency medicine, critical care, obstetrics, pediatrics, anesthesia, cardiology, surgery, trauma, toxicology, pharmacology, education, sports medicine, occupational health, public health and emergency preparedness. This gives the Scientific Advisory Council the important advantage of broad, multidisciplinary expertise in evaluating existing and new assessment methodologies, technologies, therapies and procedures—and the educational methods to teach them. More information on the science of the course content can be found at the following websites:

- [ilcor.org](http://ilcor.org)
- [redcross.org/science](http://redcross.org/science)

## Dedication

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This program is dedicated to the nurses, physicians, prehospital professionals, therapists, technicians, law enforcement, fire/rescue, advanced practice professionals, lifeguards, first responders, lay responders and all other professionals and individuals who are prepared and willing to take action when an emergency strikes or when a person is in need of care. These updates and guidelines are also dedicated to the employees and volunteers of the American Red Cross who contribute their time and talent to supporting and teaching lifesaving skills worldwide.

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# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1

### Advanced Life Support Course Introduction

Course Purpose .....	2
Course Preparation .....	2
Course Objectives.....	2
Your Role as an Advanced Life Support Provider .....	3
Course Completion Requirements .....	3

## Chapter 2

### Basic Life Support Review

Cardiac Chain of Survival .....	6
High-Quality CPR.....	7
Approach to the Patient: Basic Life Support.....	9
Approach to the Patient: Obstructed Airway .....	11
Code Card: Basic Life Support: Adults and Adolescents .....	13
Skill Sheet: Rapid Assessment for Adults.....	15
Skill Sheet: CPR for Adults .....	17
Skill Sheet: AED Use for Adults.....	21

## Chapter 3

### Tools and Therapies

Airway Management.....	26
Bag-Valve-Mask Ventilation.....	31
Supplemental Oxygen.....	32
Cardiac Monitoring.....	34
Electrocardiography .....	35
Electrical Therapies .....	36
Vascular Access.....	38
Fluid Therapy.....	39

Drug Therapy.....	40
Skill Sheet: Inserting an Oropharyngeal Airway.....	44
Skill Sheet: Inserting a Nasopharyngeal Airway .....	46
Skill Sheet: Using a Bag-Valve-Mask (BVM) Resuscitator—One Provider.....	48
Skill Sheet: Using a Bag-Valve-Mask (BVM) Resuscitator—Two Providers .....	49
Skill Sheet: Placing Electrodes for Electrocardiography.....	50
Skill Sheet: Manual Defibrillation.....	53
Skill Sheet: Synchronized Cardioversion .....	55
Skill Sheet: Transcutaneous Pacing .....	57
Skill Sheet: Intraosseous Access (Drill).....	59
Skill Sheet: Intraosseous Access (Manual Insertion) .....	63

## Chapter 4

### Working Well Together in an Emergency

Rapid Response and Resuscitation Teams .....	68
Functioning as a Team .....	69
Working as a High-Performance Team .....	70

## Chapter 5

### Assessment

Assess, Recognize and Care.....	76
Systematic Approach to Assessment .....	76
Code Card: Adult Systematic Assessment .....	81

## Chapter 6

<b>Respiratory Emergencies</b>	<b>83</b>
Respiratory Anatomy and Physiology.....	84
Pathophysiologic Mechanisms Contributing to Respiratory Emergencies .....	87
Respiratory Distress, Respiratory Failure and Respiratory Arrest .....	88
Capnography in Respiratory Emergencies .....	89
Patient Assessment.....	91
Approach to the Patient.....	92
Code Card: Adult Suspected or Known Opioid Toxicity .....	94

## Chapter 7

<b>Arrhythmias</b>	<b>95</b>
Electrical Conduction.....	96
Recognizing Bradyarrhythmias .....	98
Recognizing Tachyarrhythmias.....	101
Patient Assessment.....	104
Approach to the Patient.....	104
Code Card: Adult Bradyarrhythmia .....	108
Code Card: Adult Tachyarrhythmia.....	109

## Chapter 8

<b>Cardiac Arrest</b>	<b>111</b>
Recognizing Cardiac Arrest Rhythms .....	112
Reversible Causes of Cardiac Arrest (Hs and Ts) .....	113
Approach to the Patient.....	117
Terminating the Resuscitation Effort.....	119
Cardiac Arrest in Pregnancy .....	120
Code Card: Adult Cardiac Arrest .....	122
Code Card: Cardiac Arrest in Pregnancy.....	123

## Chapter 9

<b>Post-Cardiac Arrest Care</b>	<b>125</b>
Pathophysiologic Consequences of Cardiac Arrest.....	126
Approach to the Patient.....	126
Post-Cardiac Arrest Prognostication .....	129
Code Card: Adult Post-Cardiac Arrest Care.....	130

## Chapter 10

<b>Acute Coronary Syndromes</b>	<b>133</b>
Classification of Acute Coronary Syndromes .....	134
Goals for Management .....	134
Pathophysiology of Acute Coronary Syndromes.....	134
STEMI Chain of Survival .....	135
Recognizing Acute Coronary Syndromes .....	135
Patient Assessment.....	137
Approach to the Patient.....	138
Code Card: Adult Acute Coronary Syndromes.....	141

## Chapter 11

<b>Stroke</b>	<b>143</b>
Overview of Stroke .....	144
Acute Stroke Chain of Survival.....	144
The 8 Ds of Stroke Care .....	145
Recognizing Stroke .....	147
Patient Assessment.....	147
Approach to the Patient.....	149
Code Card: Adult Acute Stroke .....	151
National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale .....	153

<b>Glossary</b>	<b>157</b>
-----------------	------------

<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>161</b>
---------------------	------------

<b>Index</b>	<b>175</b>
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**Figure 3-6 | 30** iStock Signature Collection: miralex

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# Advanced Life Support Course Introduction

## Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of American Red Cross advanced life support (ALS) training.

## Course Purpose

When a patient experiences a life-threatening cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency, you need to act swiftly to assess the situation and the patient and provide lifesaving care.

The purpose of the American Red Cross Advanced Life Support course is to ensure that healthcare providers have the requisite knowledge and skills to assess, recognize and care for patients who are experiencing a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency (Figure 1-1). The course emphasizes providing high-quality patient care by integrating psychomotor skills, rhythm interpretation, electrical interventions and pharmacologic knowledge with critical thinking and problem solving to achieve the best possible patient outcomes.

The American Red Cross Advanced Life Support course covers the skills required for certification as an ALS provider. In addition, the key concepts that support proficient performance of these skills are reviewed.

## Course Preparation

The American Red Cross Advanced Life Support course is designed for professional healthcare providers who directly care for patients in a variety of settings and who could be called on to care for a critically ill patient. This could include, but is not limited to, nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, physician assistants, respiratory therapists, dentists, emergency medical services personnel, public safety personnel and other professional responders.



Figure 1-1 | The goal of advanced life support training is to ensure that healthcare providers working in healthcare settings have the skills to provide care to patients who are experiencing a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency.

High-quality CPR skills (including high-quality chest compressions and basic airway management) and AED skills are an essential part of ALS (Figure 1-2). In addition, strong patient assessment skills; knowledge and understanding of the medications used in cardiovascular, cerebrovascular and respiratory emergencies; expert medication administration skills; and an ability to read and interpret ECG rhythms are valuable before taking this course.

## Course Objectives

Upon successfully completing the American Red Cross Advanced Life Support course, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate high-quality basic life support skills, including high-quality chest compressions, effective ventilations and use of an AED.
- Apply concepts of effective teamwork when caring for a patient experiencing a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency.
- Integrate advanced communication, critical thinking and problem-solving skills when responding as part of a team to a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency.
- Effectively assess a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency situation using a systematic approach.
- Quickly recognize the nature of a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency.
- Provide effective and appropriate advanced life support care to address a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency.
- Provide effective and appropriate care after a return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) during a resuscitation effort.



Figure 1-2 | High-quality CPR is the foundation of every successful cardiac arrest resuscitation effort.

## Your Role as an Advanced Life Support Provider

ALS refers to the healthcare that providers deliver to adults who are experiencing a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency. The psychomotor skills needed to perform high-quality CPR; use an AED, a defibrillator, or both; and relieve an obstructed airway are the foundation of ALS. As an ALS provider, you must also be able to use advanced assessment skills to recognize problems and prioritize interventions. Finally, you must be able to provide effective care for cardiovascular, cerebrovascular and respiratory emergencies based on specific advanced life support science-based recommendations. ALS integrates the following key concepts to help providers achieve optimal patient outcomes (Figure 1-3):

- **Teamwork:** Integration and coordination of all team members working together toward a common goal
- **Communication:** A closed-loop process involving a sender, message and receiver
- **Critical thinking:** Clear and rational thinking used to identify the connection between information and actions
- **Problem solving:** Using readily available resources to identify solutions to issues that arise while providing care

## Course Completion Requirements

Many agencies, organizations and individuals look to the Red Cross for formal training that results in certification. *Red Cross certification* means that on a particular date



Figure 1-3 | Teamwork, communication, critical thinking and problem solving are essential for achieving optimal patient outcomes.

an instructor verified that a course participant could demonstrate competency in all required skills taught in the course. *Competency* is defined as being able to demonstrate correct decision-making processes, sequence care steps properly and demonstrate proficiency in completing all required skills without any coaching or assistance.

There are two ways to complete American Red Cross ALS training. You may take a traditional instructor-led course, or you may take a blended learning course that consists of an online session and an in-person skills session conducted by a Red Cross-certified instructor.

To successfully complete the Advanced Life Support Instructor-Led Training course, you must:

- Attend the entire course and participate in all class lessons.
- Actively participate in all course activities, including assuming various roles during skill practice and practice scenarios.
- Demonstrate competency in all required skills.
- Demonstrate competency in leading a team response during the team response testing scenarios.
- Successfully pass the final exam with a minimum grade of 84 percent.

To successfully complete the Advanced Life Support Blended Learning course, you must:

- Complete the online session, which includes:
  - Successfully completing each lesson, including the post-assessment.
  - Successfully passing the online final exam with a minimum grade of 84 percent.
- Attend and actively participate in the in-person skills session, during which you must:
  - Participate in all skill stations.
  - Demonstrate competency in all required skills.
  - Demonstrate competency in leading a team response during the team response testing scenarios.

Upon successful completion of the course and after the training has been reported, you will receive a course completion certificate from the American Red Cross that includes your name, the course name, the completion date and the certification validity period. The course completion certificate can be downloaded, printed or shared, as needed. Each American Red Cross certification contains a QR code that can be used by participants, instructors, employers or the American Red Cross to validate certificate authenticity.





# Basic Life Support Review

## Introduction

Expert basic life support (BLS) skills (performing high-quality CPR, using an AED and relieving an obstructed airway) are essential skills for all healthcare providers to possess. Mastery of these foundational skills is vital in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for patients in cardiac or respiratory arrest and for patients who have an obstructed airway.

## Cardiac Chain of Survival

The Cardiac Chain of Survival describes six actions that, when performed in rapid succession, increase the patient's likelihood of surviving sudden cardiac arrest. The six links in the Cardiac Chain of Survival vary slightly, depending on where the cardiac arrest occurs.

### In-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival

Only one of every five cardiac arrests in the United States occurs inside of a hospital. The Adult In-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival (Figure 2-1) includes six links:

- **Surveillance and prevention.** Hospitalized patients often show changes in vital signs and other clinical parameters in the minutes and hours leading up to cardiac arrest. Closely monitoring for changes in the patient's condition that could be warning signs of impending arrest and activating the rapid response team as appropriate may allow providers to intervene and prevent the arrest from occurring.
- **Recognition of a cardiac emergency and activation of the emergency response system.** Recognizing cardiac arrest and summoning advanced help in the form of the resuscitation team provides the patient with access to necessary personnel, equipment and interventions as soon after arrest as possible.
- **Early high-quality CPR.** High-quality CPR, starting with compressions, should be initiated immediately once cardiac arrest is recognized.
- **Early defibrillation to help restore an effective heart rhythm and significantly increase the patient's chance for survival.** Defibrillation may

restore an effective heart rhythm, increasing the patient's chance for survival.

- **Integrated post-cardiac arrest care to optimize ventilation and oxygenation and treat hypotension immediately after the return of spontaneous circulation.** After return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC), survival outcomes are improved when providers work to stabilize the patient, minimize complications, and diagnose and treat the underlying cause.
- **Recovery.** Continued follow-up during the recovery process in the form of rehabilitation, therapy and support from family and healthcare providers improves outcomes.

### Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival

Most sudden cardiac arrests occur outside of the hospital. When this is the case, the patient relies on members of the community, EMS and healthcare providers to implement the Cardiac Chain of Survival. The Adult Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival (Figure 2-2) includes six links:

- **Recognition of a cardiac emergency and activation of the emergency response system.** Immediate recognition of cardiac arrest and activation of the EMS system provides the patient with access to necessary personnel, equipment and interventions as soon after arrest as possible.
- **Early high-quality CPR.** High-quality CPR, starting with compressions, should be initiated immediately once cardiac arrest is recognized, ideally by those at the scene prior to EMS arrival.

Adult In-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival



Figure 2-1 | The In-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival for adults

## Adult Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival

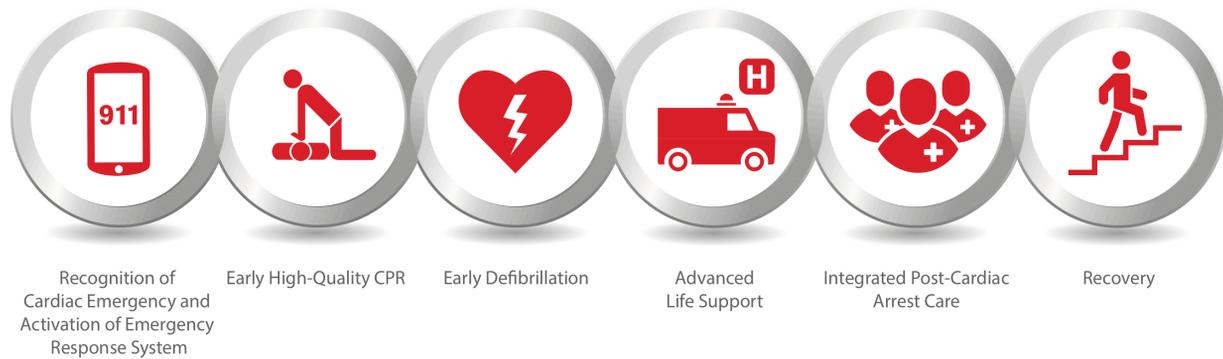


Figure 2-2 | The Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival for adults

- **Early defibrillation to help restore an effective heart rhythm and significantly increase the patient's chance for survival.** Use of an AED by those at the scene prior to EMS arrival may restore an effective heart rhythm, increasing the patient's chance for survival.
- **Advanced life support using advanced medical personnel who can provide the proper tools and medication needed to continue the lifesaving care.** Early advanced life support provided by EMS professionals at the scene and en route to the hospital provides the patient with access to emergency medical care delivered by trained professionals.
- **Integrated post-cardiac arrest care to optimize ventilation and oxygenation and treat hypotension immediately after the return of spontaneous circulation.** After ROSC, survival outcomes are improved when providers work to stabilize the patient, minimize complications, and diagnose and treat the underlying cause.
- **Recovery.** Continued follow-up during the recovery process in the form of rehabilitation, therapy and support from family and healthcare providers improves outcomes.

## High-Quality CPR

The point of CPR is to circulate oxygenated blood to vital organs when the heart and normal breathing have stopped. However, even at its best, CPR provides only a fraction of the normal blood flow to the brain and heart. To optimize patient outcomes and increase the likelihood of ROSC, providers must strive to provide the highest quality CPR at all times.

## Principles of High-Quality CPR

To provide high-quality CPR:

- Position the patient supine on a firm, flat surface and expose the patient's chest, then immediately begin chest compressions.
- Provide compressions at the correct rate (100 to 120 per minute) and at the proper depth (at least 2 inches [5 cm] but no more than 2.4 inches [6 cm] for an adult). When given at the proper rate, it should take 15 to 18 seconds to perform 30 compressions.
- Allow the chest to recoil fully after each compression. Compression and recoil times should be approximately equal. This allows the heart to fill adequately during recoil, maximizing the cardiac output generated with the next compression.
- Minimize interruptions in chest compressions. When compressions stop, blood flow to vital organs stops. In addition, after stopping compressions, some time is required to regain the minimum **coronary perfusion pressure (CPP)** necessary to achieve ROSC (Figure 2-3). The CPP is the difference between the pressure in the aorta and the pressure in the right atrium during diastole and is a reflection of myocardial blood flow. Maintaining adequate CPP (greater than 20 mmHg) during CPR has been shown to increase the likelihood of ROSC and survival.
- Avoid excessive ventilations. Each ventilation should last about 1 second and deliver just enough volume to make the chest begin to rise.

Proper compression technique is important. Position the heel of one hand in the center of the chest, on the lower half of the sternum, with your other hand on top. Interlace your fingers and lift your fingers off the chest. Position yourself so that your shoulders are directly over your hands, and keep your arms as straight as possible (Figure 2-4). Compress the chest using a straight up-and-down motion. Avoid leaning on the patient's chest.

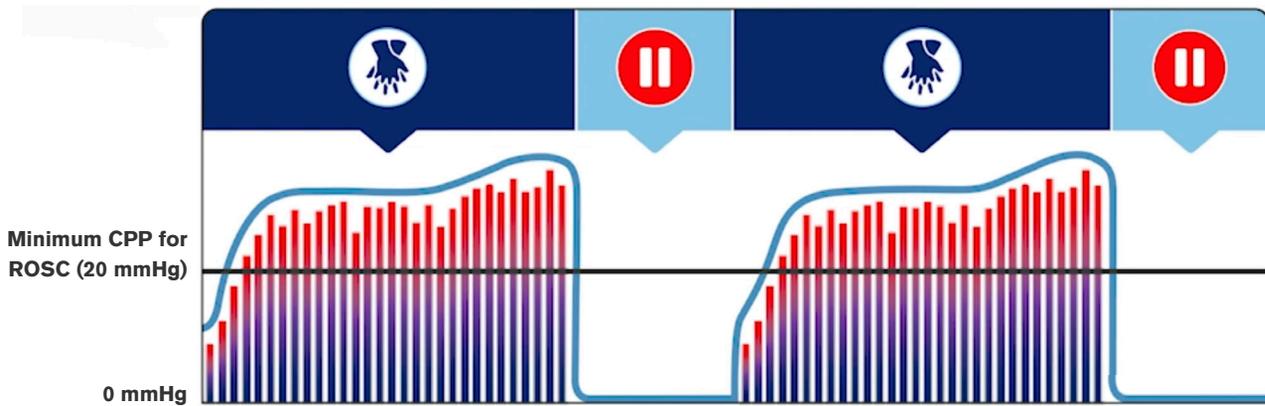


Figure 2-3 | When compressions stop, the coronary perfusion pressure (CPP) drops below 20 mmHg, the minimum level needed to increase the likelihood of return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) and survival.

High-performance CPR refers to providing high-quality CPR as part of a well-organized team response to a cardiac arrest. Coordinated, efficient teamwork helps to minimize interruptions to compressions (Figure 2-5). In addition, a team approach to CPR helps to maintain the quality of compressions by minimizing provider fatigue. Providers should switch off giving compressions every 2 minutes—or sooner if the provider giving compressions is fatigued. Finally, working as a team helps to ensure that high-quality CPR is provided because the team leader is responsible for monitoring the delivery of CPR and making adjustments in real time, enabling the team to achieve quality goals.

## Continuous Quality Improvement

Healthcare providers and their employers have a responsibility to ensure that they provide the highest quality CPR throughout every resuscitation event. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to gather data and use that data to inform improvements in individual and team

performance. Data collected about the effectiveness of CPR allows for continuous improvement, both “in the moment” and during future resuscitation events. After every resuscitation event, a debriefing session should be held, during which the team analyzes their performance using both qualitative and quantitative data. The purpose of this analysis is to make changes as necessary to positively affect the outcome of future resuscitation events.

Methods of evaluating CPR quality include visual observation, the use of feedback devices, calculations such as the chest compression fraction (CCF) and physiologic data obtained through capnography or hemodynamic monitoring.

## Visual Observation

Visual observation is an important qualitative measure of high-quality CPR. Visual observation allows for in-the-moment adjustments to technique based on feedback from the team leader or another team member. For



Figure 2-4 | Providing high-quality CPR relies on using proper technique.



Figure 2-5 | Efficient teamwork contributes to the provision of high-quality CPR.

example, the team leader may observe that the provider giving compressions is tiring or that compressions are not being delivered at the correct rate or depth. These observations allow the team leader to redirect the team as necessary to get back on track.

## Feedback Devices

Feedback devices use technology to gather data about CPR performance and provide real-time feedback. These devices collect objective data, such as the rate at which compressions and ventilations are being delivered, the depth of compressions and the amount of chest recoil. Many different types of feedback devices are available, ranging from apps on smart watches to self-contained systems, some with attachments to place on the patient. All feedback devices are designed to act as “virtual coaches,” guiding providers to adjust technique in order to perform effective, high-quality CPR. In addition, most feedback devices record data that can be analyzed after the resuscitation event, enabling improvements to be implemented for future resuscitation events.

## Chest Compression Fraction

The **chest compression fraction (CCF)** represents the amount of time spent performing compressions and is another way to gain objective feedback about the quality of CPR. It is calculated by dividing the time that providers are in contact with the patient’s chest by the total duration of the resuscitation event, beginning with the arrival of the resuscitation team and ending with the achievement of ROSC or the cessation of CPR. According to expert consensus, a CCF of at least 60% is needed to promote optimal outcomes, and the goal should be 80%. Many feedback devices are able to calculate the CCF based on the data they collect. When a feedback device is not in use, a team member may be assigned to record data that can be used to calculate the CCF, such as the duration of the resuscitation event and the duration of periods when compressions were paused.

## Capnography

**Capnography** is a noninvasive technique that uses sensors to detect end-tidal carbon dioxide (ETCO<sub>2</sub>) levels, which are displayed as waveforms on a monitor (Figure 2-6). Carbon dioxide delivery to the lungs depends on cardiac output. When circulation is adequate, a predictable amount of carbon dioxide should be exhaled. So, the ETCO<sub>2</sub> level is a quantitative measure of cardiac output—and by extension, the effectiveness of compressions. An ETCO<sub>2</sub> level in the



Figure 2-6 | The normal capnography waveform is square with a flat plateau. In patients with normal perfusion, capnography values are between 35 and 45 mmHg.

expected range also suggests that ventilations are effective.

Normal ETCO<sub>2</sub> levels are in the range of 35 to 45 mmHg. In low-perfusion states such as cardiac arrest, the ETCO<sub>2</sub> levels are much lower (15 to 20 mmHg when high-quality CPR is provided). If ETCO<sub>2</sub> levels fall below 10 mmHg, there could be a problem with the rate or quality of compressions. Information obtained by monitoring capnography values allows the team to make the necessary adjustments to achieve higher-quality CPR.

Capnography is also an effective tool for determining ROSC and for helping the resuscitation team to decide when to discontinue CPR. A sudden and sustained increase in ETCO<sub>2</sub> levels is a strong indicator that the patient has achieved ROSC. Conversely, if ETCO<sub>2</sub> levels remain less than 10 mmHg in an intubated patient who has been receiving high-quality CPR for at least 20 minutes, the likelihood that the patient will achieve ROSC is decreased, and the decision may be made to terminate the resuscitation effort. If, however, ETCO<sub>2</sub> levels remain greater than 15 mmHg, the patient has an increased chance to achieve ROSC and resuscitation efforts should continue.

## Invasive Hemodynamic Monitoring

In-hospital cardiac arrest often occurs in settings in which invasive hemodynamic monitoring is in progress or can be quickly established. In such cases, if the patient already has an indwelling arterial catheter, the arterial diastolic pressure can be used to evaluate the adequacy of chest compressions. ROSC is more likely when the arterial diastolic pressure is greater than 25 mmHg.

## Approach to the Patient: Basic Life Support

The *Basic Life Support: Adults and Adolescents Code Card* summarizes the approach to providing basic life support care for an adult.

## Rapid Assessment

The rapid assessment is used to gather information about the patient and the emergency. First, conduct a quick visual survey: assess for safety, form an initial impression about the patient's condition and determine the need for additional resources. Look for life-threatening bleeding while gathering an initial impression of the patient. If there is life-threatening bleeding, control it with any available resources (including a tourniquet, hemostatic dressing, or both as appropriate) and, if not already done, activate EMS, the rapid response team or the resuscitation team. Next, if the patient appears to be unresponsive, quickly check for responsiveness, breathing and a central pulse (Figure 2-7).

- To check for responsiveness, use a “shout-tap-shout” sequence. Shout “Are you OK?” using the patient’s name if you know it. Tap the patient on the shoulders, then shout again. If the patient does not respond, initiate the emergency response by calling for EMS, the rapid response team or the resuscitation team as appropriate and send someone to get an AED.
- To check for breathing and a pulse, open the airway by using the head-tilt/chin-lift technique to tilt the head to a past-neutral position. Use the modified jaw-thrust maneuver if you suspect a head, neck or spinal injury. Once the airway is open, simultaneously check for breathing and a carotid pulse for no more than 10 seconds. Look again for life-threatening bleeding while checking for breathing and a pulse. Quickly scan down the body, looking for blood or other signs and symptoms that might not have been seen during the initial impression.



Figure 2-7 | When a patient appears to be unresponsive, check for responsiveness, breathing and a pulse.

### Practice Note

Use the A-B-C mnemonic to easily recall and perform the steps of the breathing and pulse check. Open the airway (A), check for the presence or absence of normal breathing (B) and simultaneously assess for circulation (C) by a pulse check. If necessary, begin CPR immediately, starting with chest compressions.

If the patient is unresponsive, is not breathing (or has ineffective ventilation) but has a pulse, the patient is in respiratory arrest or failure. Provide 1 ventilation every 6 seconds. Each ventilation should last about 1 second and make the chest begin to rise. Continue giving ventilations until the patient begins to breathe normally on their own, another trained provider takes over, you are presented with a valid do not resuscitate (DNR) order, the pulse becomes absent (in which case you should begin CPR or use an AED if one is available and ready to use) or the situation becomes unsafe.

If the patient is unresponsive, is not breathing normally (or is only gasping) and has no pulse, the patient is in cardiac arrest. Begin CPR immediately, starting with compressions, and use an AED as soon as it is available.

If the patient is breathing and has a pulse, perform the primary assessment and provide emergent/initial interventions. Position the patient as appropriate for their clinical condition, and perform the secondary assessment as the patient's condition allows. Continually reassess the patient, recognize issues and provide care as needed.

The *Rapid Assessment for Adults* Skill Sheet provides step-by-step guidance for conducting a rapid assessment.

## CPR and AED

### CPR

In most cases, when caring for an adult in cardiac arrest (regardless of whether care is being provided by a single provider or multiple providers), the hand position, compression rate, compression depth and compression-to-ventilation ratio of 30:2 remain the same. The exception to this is when a patient has an advanced airway in place. At minimum, two providers must be present. One provider delivers 1 ventilation every 6 seconds. At the same time, the second provider performs compressions. Compressions should be delivered continuously (100

to 120 per minute) with no pauses for ventilations when providing CPR to an adult patient with an advanced airway in place.

When multiple providers are available, the first provider performs the rapid assessment and begins providing CPR, starting with chest compressions. Meanwhile, another provider calls for additional resources and gets and prepares the AED, if available. The first provider continues to provide high-quality CPR with 30 compressions to 2 ventilations until another provider is ready to assist or the AED is ready to analyze.

The *CPR for Adults* Skill Sheet provides step-by-step guidance for performing CPR on an adult.

## AED

When a patient experiences cardiac arrest, an AED should be applied as soon as one is available (Figure 2-8). AEDs are programmed to deliver a shock to a patient in cardiac arrest when they detect ventricular fibrillation or ventricular tachycardia. Early use of an AED greatly increases the patient's chance for survival.

If CPR is in progress and more than one provider is present, do not stop CPR to apply the AED. If you are alone and an AED is available, you should use it as soon as you have determined that the patient is in cardiac arrest.

Use adult AED pads. Place one pad to the right of the sternum and below the right clavicle, and the other pad on the left side of the chest on the midaxillary line a few inches below the left armpit. Remember to stay clear of the patient while the AED is analyzing the rhythm or delivering a shock, and resume compressions immediately after a shock is delivered or the AED advises that a shock is not indicated. Perform about 2 minutes of CPR (about 5 cycles of 30 compressions



Figure 2-8 | Use an AED as soon as one is available.

to 2 ventilations) until the AED prompts that it is reanalyzing, the patient shows signs of ROSC or you are instructed by the team leader or more advanced personnel to stop.

The *AED Use for Adults* Skill Sheet provides step-by-step guidance for using an AED.

## Approach to the Patient: Obstructed Airway

A patient who cannot cough, speak, cry or breathe requires immediate care. If the patient does not receive quick and effective care, an airway obstruction can lead to respiratory arrest, which in turn can lead to cardiac arrest.

### Responsive Adult

A patient who is choking typically has a panicked, confused or surprised facial expression. The patient may place one or both hands on their throat (the “universal sign of choking”). Other behaviors may include running about, flailing the arms or trying to get another’s attention. You may hear stridor (high-pitched squeaking noises) as the patient tries to breathe, or you may hear nothing at all. The patient’s skin may initially appear flushed, but it will become pale or cyanotic as the body is deprived of oxygen.

Encourage the patient who is coughing forcefully to continue coughing until they are able to breathe normally. If the patient cannot breathe or has a weak or ineffective cough, summon additional resources and obtain consent. Then, provide up to 5 back blows until the obstruction is relieved. If the obstruction is not relieved, transition to up to 5 abdominal or chest thrusts. If necessary, continue with cycles of 5 back blows followed by 5 abdominal or chest thrusts until the obstruction is relieved or the patient becomes unresponsive.

### Back Blows

To perform back blows, position yourself to the side and slightly behind the patient. For a patient in a wheelchair, you may need to kneel. Provide support by placing one arm diagonally across the patient’s chest. Then bend the patient forward at the waist so that the patient’s upper body is parallel to the ground (or as close as it can be). Using the heel of your other hand, give firm back blows between the scapulae (Figure 2-9). Make each blow a separate and distinct attempt to dislodge the object.



Figure 2-9 | For effective back blows, bend the patient forward at the waist and use the heel of your hand to give back blows between the scapulae.



Figure 2-10 | To perform abdominal thrusts, place the thumb side of your fist just above the navel, cover the fist with your other hand and give quick inward and upward thrusts.

## Abdominal Thrusts

To perform abdominal thrusts, stand behind the patient, with one foot in front of the other for balance and stability. If possible, place your front foot between the patient's feet. If the patient is in a wheelchair, you may need to kneel behind them.

Wrap your arms around the patient's waist. Use one or two fingers to find the navel. Make a fist with one hand and place the thumb side of your fist against the middle of the abdomen, just above the navel. Grab your fist with your other hand and give quick inward and upward thrusts (Figure 2-10). Make sure each thrust is a distinct attempt to dislodge the object.

## Chest Thrusts

Chest thrusts should be used instead of abdominal thrusts if you cannot reach around the patient, the patient might be pregnant, the patient is in a bed or a wheelchair with features that make abdominal thrusts difficult to do, or abdominal thrusts are not effective in dislodging the object. To perform chest thrusts, position yourself behind the patient as you would for abdominal thrusts. Place the thumb side of your fist against the center of the patient's chest on the lower half of the sternum. Then cover your fist with your other hand and pull straight back, providing a quick inward thrust into the patient's chest. Make sure each thrust is a distinct attempt to dislodge the object.

## Airway Management Techniques

If back blows, abdominal thrusts and/or chest thrusts are not effective or practical, use a combination of basic or advanced airway management techniques based on your level of training and experience.

## Unresponsive Adult

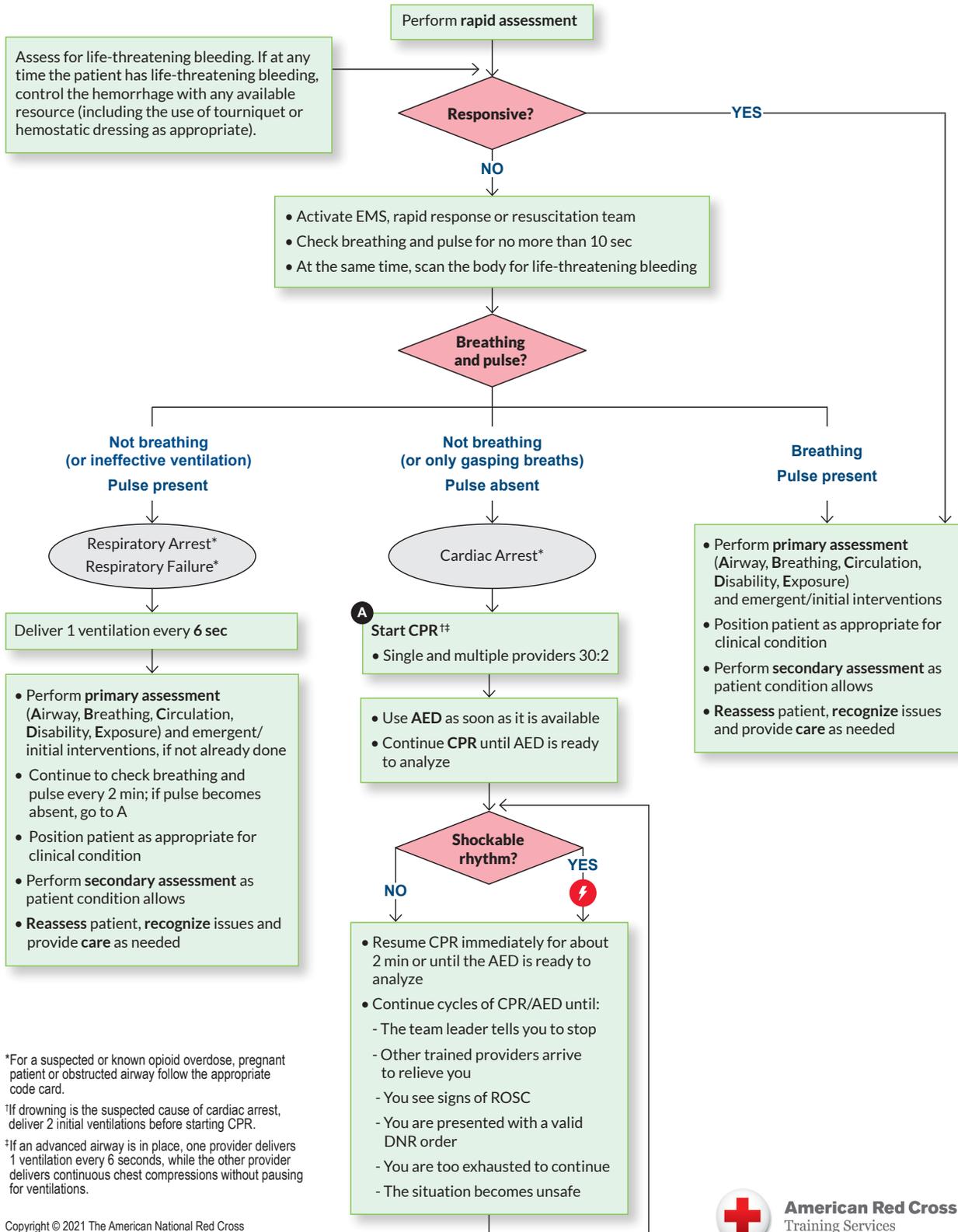
If a patient who is choking becomes unresponsive, carefully lower them to a firm, flat surface, while protecting their head. Then, send someone to get an AED and summon additional resources (if appropriate and you have not already done so). Immediately begin CPR, starting with chest compressions. Compressions may help clear the airway by moving the blockage into the upper airway and the oropharynx, where it can be seen and removed.

After each set of chest compressions and before attempting ventilations, open the patient's mouth and look for the object. If you see the object in the patient's mouth, remove it using a finger sweep. If you do not see the object, do not perform a blind finger sweep. Next, attempt 2 ventilations. Never try more than 2 ventilations during one cycle of CPR, even if the chest does not rise. Continue CPR, checking for an object before each set of ventilations. Health care professionals with appropriate training may consider the use of Magill forceps to remove a foreign body obstructing the airway.

# BASIC LIFE SUPPORT: ADULTS AND ADOLESCENTS

BLS - 2020 VERSION

 Shock



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Training Services

# BASIC LIFE SUPPORT: ADULTS AND ADOLESCENTS

BLS - 2020 VERSION

CPR Technique		
<p><b>Compression-to-ventilation ratio: 30:2</b></p>	 <p>Compressions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hand position:</b> Centered on the lower half of the sternum</li> <li>• <b>Depth:</b> At least 2 inches (5 cm)</li> <li>• <b>Rate:</b> 100 to 120 per min</li> <li>• <b>Full chest recoil:</b> Compression and recoil times should be approximately equal</li> </ul>
<p><b>Switch CPR compressors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every 2 min</li> <li>• During rhythm check</li> <li>• If provider is fatigued</li> </ul>	 <p>Ventilations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open airway to past-neutral position. Use modified jaw-thrust maneuver instead if you suspect head, neck or spinal injury.</li> <li>• Each ventilation should last about 1 sec and make the chest begin to rise; allow the air to exit before delivering next ventilation.</li> <li>• If an advanced airway is in place, one provider delivers 1 ventilation every 6 seconds, while the other provider delivers continuous chest compressions without pausing for ventilations.</li> </ul>



## SKILL SHEET

# Rapid Assessment for Adults

### Step 1 Perform a visual survey

- Make sure the environment is safe—for you, your team and any individuals present during the emergency.
- Gather an initial impression of the patient, which includes looking for life-threatening bleeding.
- Quickly determine the need for additional resources.

#### Alert

If at any time the patient has life-threatening bleeding, control the hemorrhage with any available resource (including the use of a tourniquet or hemostatic dressing as appropriate).



### Step 2 Check for responsiveness

- Shout, “Are you OK?” Use the patient’s name if you know it.
- Tap the patient’s shoulder and shout again (shout-tap-shout).
- If the patient is unresponsive and you are alone, call for help to activate EMS, the rapid response team or the resuscitation team, as appropriate, and call for an AED.
- If the patient is unresponsive and you are with another provider, the first provider stays with the patient. Other providers activate EMS, the rapid response team or the resuscitation team, as appropriate, and retrieve the AED, BVM and other emergency equipment.



## SKILL SHEET

# Rapid Assessment for Adults (*continued*)

### Step 3 Simultaneously check for breathing, a pulse, and life-threatening bleeding

- Make sure the patient is in a supine (face-up) position. If they are face-down, you must roll them onto their back, taking care not to create or worsen a suspected injury.
- Open the airway to a past-neutral position using the head-tilt/chin-lift technique; or, use the modified jaw-thrust maneuver if you suspect a head, neck or spinal injury.
- Simultaneously check for breathing and a pulse (carotid) for no more than 10 seconds.
- At the same time, scan the body for life-threatening bleeding or other signs and symptoms that might not have been seen during the initial impression.



#### Practice Note

##### A-B-C Mnemonic

Use the A-B-C mnemonic to easily recall and perform assessment, including opening of the airway (A), checking for the presence or absence of normal breathing (B), and simultaneously assessing for circulation (C) by a pulse check. If necessary, CPR should then begin with delivery of chest compressions.

### Step 4 Provide care based on the conditions found

## SKILL SHEET

# CPR for Adults

### Step 1 Conduct a rapid assessment

- Perform a quick visual survey looking for life-threatening bleeding.
- Check for responsiveness.
- Open the airway and simultaneously check for breathing and a pulse (carotid) for no more than 10 seconds. At the same time, scan the body again for life-threatening bleeding.
- If the patient is not breathing (or only gasping) and their central pulse is absent, begin CPR.



### Step 2 Place the patient on a firm, flat surface

- In a healthcare setting, use a bed with a CPR feature, or place a CPR board under the patient.
- Adjust the bed to an appropriate working height or use a step stool. Lower the bed side rail closest to you.
- In other settings, move the patient to the floor or ground and kneel beside them.



### Step 3 Position your hands correctly

- Expose the patient's chest to ensure proper hand placement and visualize chest recoil.
- Place the heel of one hand in the center of the patient's chest on the lower half of the sternum.
- Place your other hand on top of the first and interlace your fingers or hold them up so that they are not resting on the patient's chest.



## SKILL SHEET

### CPR for Adults *(continued)*

#### Step 4 Position your body effectively

- Position yourself so your shoulders are directly over your hands. This position lets you compress the chest using a straight up-and-down motion.
- To help keep your arms straight, lock your elbows.



#### Practice Note

If drowning is the suspected cause of cardiac arrest, deliver 2 initial ventilations before starting CPR.



#### Step 5 Perform 30 chest compressions

- For an adult, compress the chest to a depth of at least 2 inches (5 cm). If you are using a feedback device, make sure the compressions are no more than 2.4 inches (6 cm) deep.
- Provide smooth compressions at a rate of 100 to 120 per minute.
- Allow the chest to fully recoil after each compression. Avoid leaning on the patient's chest at the top of the compression. Compression and recoil times should be approximately equal as this improves the circulation generated by CPR.



#### Practice Note

Consider the use of mechanical CPR (mCPR) devices for an adult patient in cardiac arrest, if the BLS response team is practiced and adept at rapid application with less than a 10-second interruption in chest compressions.



## SKILL SHEET

### CPR for Adults *(continued)*

#### Step 6 Seal the mask and open the airway

- Use an adult pocket mask for single-provider CPR or a BVM for multiple-provider CPR. Remember, a two-person technique for BVM ventilation is the preferred methodology.
- Seal the mask and simultaneously open the airway to a past-neutral position using the head-tilt/chin-lift technique.
- Or, use the modified jaw-thrust maneuver if you suspect a head, neck or spinal injury.



#### Practice Note

Attach supplemental oxygen to the BVM resuscitator as soon as appropriate and when enough resources are available.

#### Step 7 Provide 2 ventilations

- While maintaining the mask seal and open airway, provide smooth, effortless ventilations. Each ventilation should last about 1 second and make the chest begin to rise; allow the air to exit before delivering next ventilation. Avoid excessive ventilation.
- If you do not have a pocket mask or BVM, provide mouth-to-mouth or mouth-to-nose ventilations.



## SKILL SHEET

# CPR for Adults *(continued)*

### Practice Note

If an advanced airway is in place, one provider delivers 1 ventilation every 6 seconds. If an advanced airway is in place, the 30:2 ratio does not apply. In this case, one provider delivers 1 ventilation every 6 seconds, while the other provider delivers continuous chest compressions without pausing for ventilations.

## Step 8 Switch positions every 2 minutes

- When providing CPR with multiple providers, smoothly switch positions about every 2 minutes. This should take less than 10 seconds.
- The compressor calls for a position change by saying “switch” in place of the number 1 in the compression cycle.



## Step 9 Continue CPR

Continue providing CPR until:

- The team leader tells you to stop
- Other trained providers arrive to relieve you
- You see signs of ROSC
- You are presented with a valid DNR order
- You are too exhausted to continue
- The situation becomes unsafe



### Practice Note

Upon achieving ROSC, supplemental oxygen should be used based on your facility's protocols to maintain a normal oxygen saturation level while avoiding hyperoxygenation. Providers should use a pulse oximeter to monitor oxygen saturation.

## SKILL SHEET

# AED Use for Adults

### Step 1 Turn on the AED and follow the prompts

- Because AED models function differently, follow your facility's protocols and the manufacturer's instructions for the AED you have.



### Step 2 Expose the chest

- Expose the chest and wipe it dry, if necessary.

### Step 3 Attach the pads

- Use an anterior/lateral pad placement, according to the manufacturer instructions:
  - Place one pad on the upper right chest, below the right clavicle to the right of the sternum.
  - Place the other pad on the left side of the chest along the midaxillary line a few inches below the armpit.
- Or, use an anterior/posterior placement, according to the manufacturer instructions:
  - Place one pad to the center of the patient's chest—on the sternum.
  - Place one pad to the patient's back between the scapulae.



#### Alert

Do not use pediatric AED pads or pediatric levels of energy on an adult or on a child older than 8 years or weighing more than 55 pounds.

## SKILL SHEET

### AED Use for Adults *(continued)*



#### Practice Note

It is safe to use an AED on a pregnant patient. However, AED pads should not incorporate any breast tissue.

#### Step 4

### Prepare to let the AED analyze the heart's rhythm

- If necessary, plug in the connector and push the analyze button.
- Instruct everyone to stand clear while the AED analyzes. No one, including you, should be touching the patient.
- If you are working as a team, prepare to smoothly switch positions to prevent fatigue. The provider giving compressions should hover their hands above the patient's chest.



#### Practice Note

When the AED is analyzing the rhythm, pause compressions and ventilations, even when using devices with artifact-filtering algorithms.



#### Step 5

### Deliver a shock, if the AED determines one is needed

- If the AED advises a shock, again instruct everyone to stand clear. The compressor should continue to hover their hands over the patient's chest in preparation for CPR.
- Press the shock button to deliver the shock.



## SKILL SHEET

### AED Use for Adults *(continued)*

#### Step 6 After the AED delivers the shock, or if no shock is needed —

- Immediately begin CPR.
- Continue for about 2 minutes until:
  - The AED prompts that it is reanalyzing.
  - The patient shows signs of return of spontaneous circulation.
  - The team leader or other trained providers instruct you to stop.
- If you are working as a team, smoothly switch positions approximately every 2 minutes (which usually occurs at the time of AED analysis) to prevent fatigue.



#### Practice Note

After a shock is delivered, immediately resume CPR for 2 minutes before pausing compressions for the AED to analyze the heart rhythm. However, based on the clinical situation, you may consider performing rhythm analysis after defibrillation, recognizing that this may not be possible on all AEDs.





**CO<sub>2</sub> No Sensor**  
**Touch when sensor connected**

## Tools and Therapies

### Introduction

As a member of a high-performance resuscitation team, you must be familiar with the equipment and interventions that are used most frequently when caring for a patient who is experiencing a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency. This chapter reviews equipment and interventions commonly used to assess and stabilize an acutely ill patient.

# Airway Management

## Suctioning

Suctioning is used to clear the airway of excessive secretions, vomitus or blood. Suctioning can be performed through the nose or mouth and when a basic or advanced airway is in place.

Suctioning is performed using a flexible or rigid catheter that is attached via tubing to a suction unit, which may be wall-mounted or portable. The suction unit has a pressure gauge to indicate the amount of negative pressure (suction force) and a collection canister.

- Flexible catheters are inserted through the mouth or nose and are best suited for removing thin, fluid secretions from the oropharynx or nasopharynx. A sterile flexible catheter is used to suction an endotracheal tube.
- Rigid (Yankauer) catheters are inserted through the mouth and are best suited for removing thick or particulate matter from the oropharynx.

### Practice Note

Use appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., face shield, gown, gloves) when suctioning a patient.

### Practice Note

Suctioning can induce hypoxia and bradycardia (as a result of vagal stimulation). Always monitor the patient's oxygen saturation, heart rate and rhythm and appearance while suctioning. If the patient shows signs of compromise (e.g., decreased oxygen saturation, bradycardia, arrhythmia, cyanosis), stop suctioning immediately, administer high-flow oxygen and provide ventilation assistance as needed.

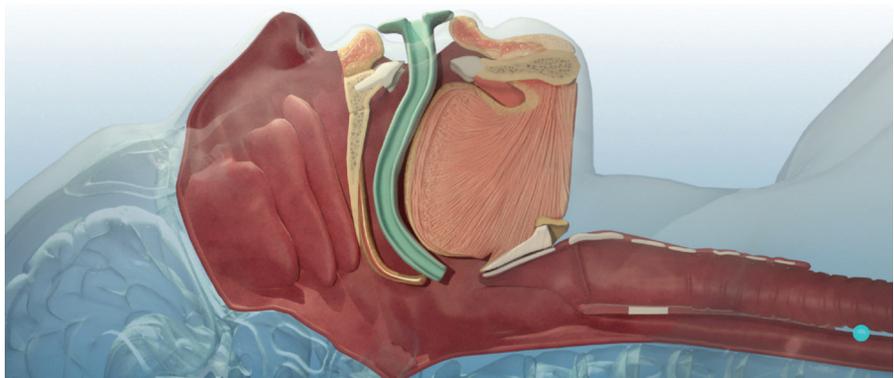
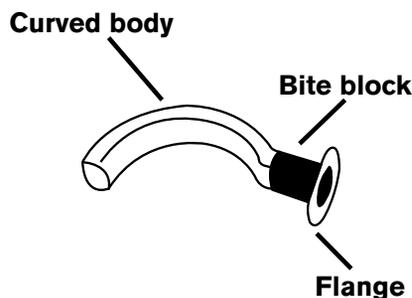


Figure 3-1 | Oropharyngeal airway

## Basic Airways

An oropharyngeal airway (OPA) or nasopharyngeal airway (NPA) can be used to maintain an open airway.

### Practice Note

When providing ventilations to a patient with an OPA or NPA in place, maintain an open airway using the head-tilt/chin-lift technique or the jaw-thrust maneuver.

## Oropharyngeal Airway

An OPA provides a channel for air movement and suctioning. The curved body of the airway fits over the tongue and holds it up and away from the posterior wall of the pharynx (Figure 3-1).

An OPA is only indicated for use in an unconscious patient. Do not use an OPA in a conscious or semiconscious patient with intact cough or gag reflexes. In addition, avoid using an OPA in patients with oral trauma or who have recently undergone oral surgery.

The *Inserting an Oropharyngeal Airway (OPA) Skill Sheet* provides step-by-step guidance for inserting an OPA.

## Nasopharyngeal Airway

An NPA is a soft rubber tube with a flange on one end and a beveled tip on the other. NPAs are available in a range of diameters. The NPA is inserted through the nose and extends to the posterior pharynx to provide a channel for air movement and suctioning (Figure 3-2).

An NPA may be used in a conscious, semiconscious or unconscious patient. Do not use an NPA in a patient with a possible skull or facial fracture. Exercise caution if considering use of an NPA in a patient with suspected head trauma.

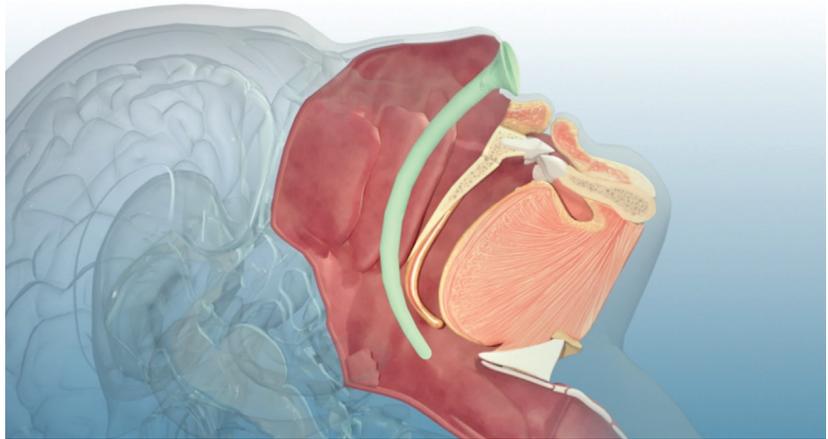
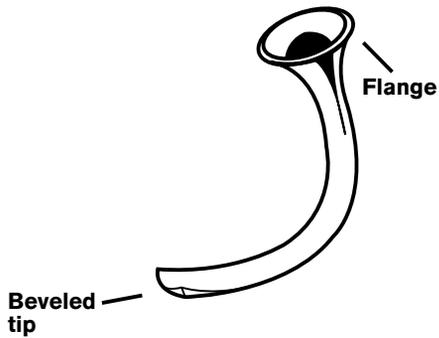


Figure 3-2 | Nasopharyngeal airway

The *Inserting a Nasopharyngeal Airway (NPA) Skill Sheet* provides step-by-step guidance for inserting an NPA.

## Advanced Airways

Placement of an advanced airway is indicated when:

- An open airway cannot be maintained using manual techniques or a basic airway.
- Airway protection is necessary because of impaired airway reflexes (e.g., as a result of impaired level of consciousness).
- Continuous ventilation management is required.

The risks of placing an advanced airway must be weighed against the potential benefits. Improper placement of an advanced airway can lead to complications that further destabilize the patient. Additionally, although it is possible to place supraglottic airways while CPR is in progress without pausing compressions, endotracheal intubation may require pausing compressions briefly. If it is possible to maintain adequate ventilation with a bag-valve-mask (BVM) resuscitator, consider delaying placement of an advanced airway.

## Types of Advanced Airways

Advanced airway options include supraglottic airways and transglottic airways (Table 3-1). **Supraglottic airways**, such as laryngeal mask airways and laryngeal tubes, do not pass through the vocal cords, whereas **transglottic airways**, such as endotracheal tubes, do. The choice of advanced airway depends on the patient's condition, the available resources and the provider's capabilities and scope of practice.

### Laryngeal Mask Airway

The laryngeal mask airway consists of an airway tube and a mask with an inflatable cuff at the distal end. The mask is advanced along the contour of the pharynx with the aperture of the mask facing the tongue until resistance is met. Properly positioned, the mask opening overlies the glottis, while the bottom rim wedges up against the upper esophageal sphincter, creating a seal. Once the cuff of the mask is inflated, the glottis is isolated, permitting air from the tube to enter the trachea (Figure 3-3).

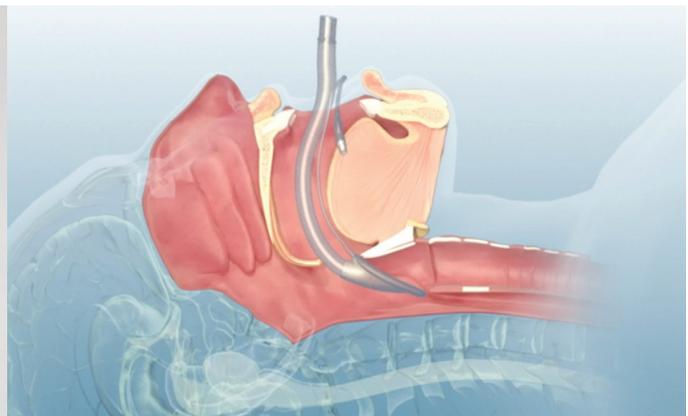
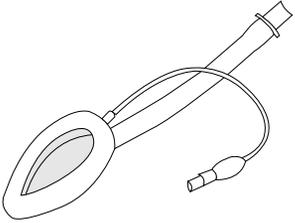
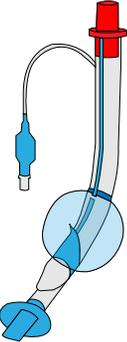
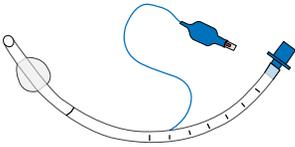


Figure 3-3 | Laryngeal mask airway

Table 3-1 | Advanced Airways

Advanced Airway	Advantages	Limitations	Precautions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Laryngeal mask airway</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Trained providers more readily available; easier to learn how to insert (as compared with an endotracheal tube)</li> <li>■ Alternative to endotracheal intubation when patient access is limited or positioning of the patient for endotracheal intubation is impossible</li> <li>■ Lower risk for regurgitation (as compared with BVM ventilation)</li> <li>■ Can be inserted during CPR without interrupting chest compressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Does not offer protection of the airway from aspiration as an endotracheal tube does</li> <li>■ May not be effective for patients requiring higher ventilation pressures (e.g., those with lung disease)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improper placement may cause suboptimal ventilation, gastric distension or laryngospasm/obstruction of the airway</li> <li>■ Head movement and suctioning of the pharynx can cause displacement of the device</li> <li>■ Tissue damage may occur with prolonged use</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Laryngeal tube</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Trained providers more readily available; easier to learn how to insert (as compared with an endotracheal tube)</li> <li>■ Isolates the airway and reduces the risk for aspiration (as compared with BVM ventilation)</li> <li>■ Can be inserted during CPR without interrupting chest compressions</li> </ul>	<p>...</p>	<p>...</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Endotracheal tube</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offers protection of the airway from aspiration</li> <li>■ Facilitates tracheal suctioning</li> <li>■ Provides an alternate administration route for some medications</li> <li>■ Best choice when the need for long-term assisted ventilation is anticipated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Training is more complex than for supraglottic airways</li> <li>■ Skill is outside scope of practice for many providers</li> <li>■ Providers require a great deal of practice and experience to become proficient</li> <li>■ Requires laryngoscopy</li> <li>■ High incidence of complications when placement is attempted by inexperienced providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improper placement can result in severe complications, including brain damage and death</li> </ul>

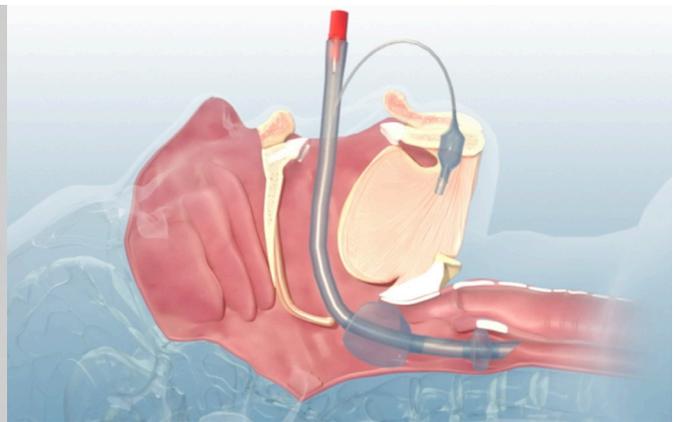


Figure 3-4 | Laryngeal tube

### Laryngeal Tube

The laryngeal tube consists of an airway tube with a larger, proximal oropharyngeal cuff and a smaller, distal esophageal cuff. The laryngeal tube is inserted against the hard palate and advanced down the midline until resistance is met. When properly positioned and the cuffs are inflated, the proximal cuff isolates the laryngopharynx from the oropharynx and nasopharynx, and the distal cuff isolates the laryngopharynx from the esophagus (Figure 3-4).

### Endotracheal Tube

Use of an endotracheal tube may be preferred over a supraglottic airway when there is disease at or below the level of the glottis, when prolonged assisted ventilation is needed or when higher ventilatory pressures are required. Endotracheal intubation also protects the airway from aspiration of gastric contents, a protection that cannot be ensured with supraglottic airways.

The endotracheal tube may be inserted through the mouth (i.e., orotracheal intubation) or the nose (i.e.,

nasotracheal intubation). The orotracheal route is used most often because it is faster and associated with fewer complications. Endotracheal intubation is facilitated by direct visualization of the airway using a laryngoscope equipped with a light source.

The endotracheal tube consists of an airway tube with an inflatable cuff and beveled tip at the distal end and a connector at the proximal end. A stylet may be used to stiffen and shape the endotracheal tube to facilitate insertion. The laryngoscope blade is used to displace the epiglottis and the endotracheal tube is passed through the vocal cords and into the trachea. When the endotracheal tube is properly inserted and the cuff is inflated, the cuff forms a seal against the walls of the trachea (Figure 3-5).

Laryngoscope blades (Figure 3-6) may be straight (e.g., Miller blade) or curved (e.g., Macintosh blade) and are available in various sizes. Ensure that backup blades a few sizes smaller and a few sizes larger than the selected blade are available before beginning the procedure. Test the lightbulbs on the selected and backup blades by attaching the blade to the

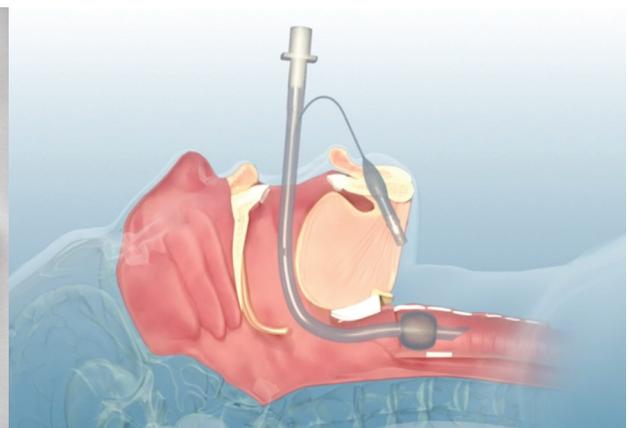
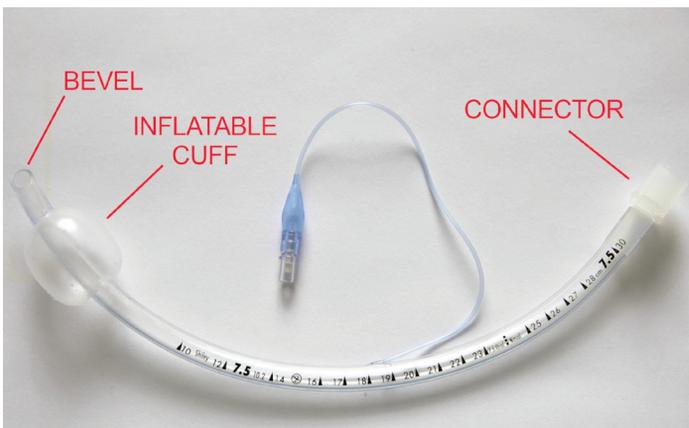


Figure 3-5 | Endotracheal tube



Figure 3-6 | Laryngoscope blades. (A) Straight (Miller) blade. (B) Curved (Macintosh) blade.

laryngoscope handle. Tighten each lightbulb to prevent dislodgement during intubation.

### Practice Note

To minimize interruptions to chest compressions during endotracheal intubation, be prepared to insert the laryngoscope blade and advance the endotracheal tube as soon as compressions are paused. Pause compressions only long enough to pass the endotracheal tube through the vocal cords.

### Practice Note

Intubation of the right (most common) or left mainstem bronchus is a possibility if the endotracheal tube is advanced too far. In this case, only one lung will be ventilated, which can lead to hypoxemia and overinflation of the ventilated lung. Clinical signs of right or left mainstem bronchus intubation include unilateral chest expansion and breath sounds.

## Confirming Placement of an Advanced Airway

When an advanced airway is in use, confirming its correct placement initially is essential. In addition, airway placement should be confirmed whenever the patient's position changes and on an ongoing basis. Correct

placement of an advanced airway is verified using both physical assessment techniques and confirmation devices, such as capnography, a colorimetric or other nonwaveform exhaled carbon dioxide detector or an esophageal detector device.

### Practice Note

Nonwaveform exhaled carbon dioxide detectors are not effective for confirming correct airway placement in low-perfusion states (e.g., cardiac arrest, shock).

## Physical Assessment

Always assess the patient after placing an advanced airway for clinical indications of correct placement. These include bilateral chest rise with ventilations, bilateral breath sounds and an absence of gurgling sounds on auscultation of the epigastric region.

## Capnography

Capnography is considered the most reliable means of quickly confirming and monitoring endotracheal tube placement. Although studies have not yet validated capnography's effectiveness for confirming and monitoring placement of other types of advanced airways, it stands to reason that effective ventilations when a supraglottic airway is in use would also produce the expected end-tidal carbon dioxide (ETCO<sub>2</sub>) values and capnography waveforms.

To confirm endotracheal tube placement using capnography:

- Attach the capnography sampling device directly to the endotracheal tube and attach the ventilation bag to the adapter.
- Provide 1 full ventilation and wait for a waveform to appear on the monitor. With some devices, this may take up to 3 seconds.
  - A four-point square waveform indicates tracheal intubation. Note that in cardiac arrest, capnography will only record a waveform when compressions and ventilations are being given.
- Equal bilateral breath sounds and three square waveforms in a row on the monitor confirm correct placement of the endotracheal tube.
  - Esophageal intubation will not produce a waveform, or it will produce a waveform that is not well defined.
  - If the waveform is square but breath sounds are absent on the left, right mainstem bronchus intubation is likely.

- After confirming correct placement, secure the endotracheal tube and control ventilations, keeping the  $\text{ETCO}_2$  level between 35 and 45 mmHg in normal perfusion states.

### Practice Note

When an advanced airway is in place, always monitor the patient for signs of compromise. Clinical signs of compromise, a change in capnography waveform appearance or a sudden decrease in the  $\text{ETCO}_2$  level may be signs of airway displacement or other complications.

## Bag-Valve-Mask Ventilation

**Ventilation** is the mechanical process of moving air into and out of the body. When spontaneous breathing is absent or is insufficient to support adequate ventilation and gas exchange, assisted ventilation is indicated. A BVM resuscitator is used to ventilate the patient while awaiting placement of an advanced airway or when the need for assisted ventilation is expected to be short-term. Using a BVM resuscitator correctly requires ample training and practice.

The BVM resuscitator consists of a cushioned mask that fits over the patient's mouth and nose and is connected via a one-way valve to a self-inflating compressible chamber, or bag (Figure 3-7). Squeezing the bag with the mask properly sealed over the patient's mouth and nose forces air into the lungs (positive pressure ventilation). Releasing the bag causes it to self-inflate by drawing air from the other end. The one-way valve between the

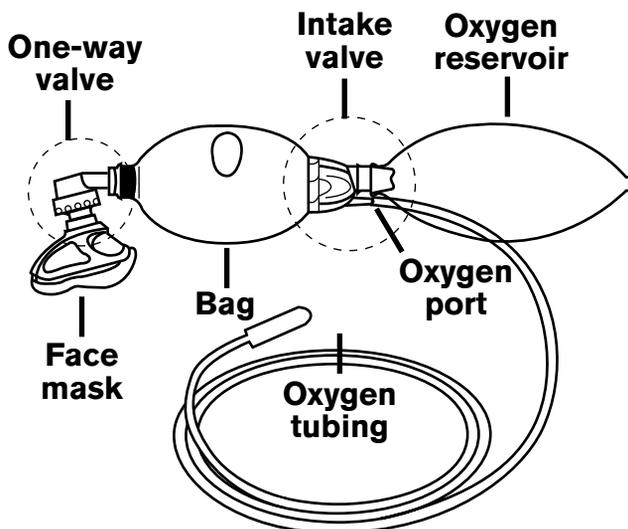


Figure 3-7 | Parts of a bag-valve-mask (BVM) resuscitator

bag and the mask prevents exhaled air from re-entering the bag. When an advanced airway is in place, the bag is attached to the advanced airway, rather than to a mask.

The BVM resuscitator can be used with ambient air or attached to supplemental oxygen. Most BVM resuscitators come with the oxygen reservoir already attached. When the BVM resuscitator is connected to a high-flow (15 L/min) supplemental oxygen source, the reservoir fills with oxygen. The reservoir, which fills when the patient exhales, allows for the maximum concentration of oxygen to be delivered to the patient with each ventilation.

A BVM resuscitator can be used by one or two providers. Performing BVM resuscitation as a two-person technique is essential for providing adequate mask seal and thus adequate ventilation. When there is only one provider to deliver ventilations, using a pocket mask provides better ventilation volume. However, factors such as limited personnel or the need to perform other time-critical interventions may preclude using two-person BVM technique. Additionally, the need for positive end-expiratory pressure (PEEP), infection control or supplemental oxygen may require use of a BVM resuscitator over a pocket mask. In these situations, one-person BVM technique is allowable.

To minimize complications when using a BVM resuscitator, depress the bag slowly (over 1 second) and only about halfway to deliver the minimal tidal volume. Complications that can result from improper technique include:

- **Decreased cardiac output.** Positive pressure ventilation increases the intrathoracic pressure, which in turn decreases venous return.
- **Barotrauma.** Delivering too much pressure can damage the airways, lungs and other organs.
- **Volutrauma.** Excessive volume can lead to tension pneumothorax (especially in patients with lung disease).
- **Gastric insufflation.** Increased airway pressure can cause air to enter the stomach, leading to gastric distension and increasing the risk for regurgitation and aspiration.

Pay close attention to any increasing difficulty when providing ventilations using a BVM resuscitator. This difficulty may indicate an increase in intrathoracic pressure, inadequate airway opening or other complications. Be sure to share this information with the team for corrective actions.

The *Using a Bag-Valve-Mask (BVM) Resuscitator—One Provider Skill Sheet* and the *Using a Bag-Valve-Mask Resuscitator—Two Provider Skill Sheet* provide step-by-step guidance for using a BVM resuscitator.

## Supplemental Oxygen

The administration of supplemental oxygen is often indicated for patients experiencing a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency. Oxygen delivery systems consist of an oxygen source (wall-mounted or an oxygen cylinder), a flowmeter and a delivery device. Oxygen cylinders also have a pressure regulator, which reduces the pressure of the oxygen to a safe level.

### Oxygen Delivery Devices

The maximum flow rate and concentration of oxygen that can be delivered vary according to the delivery device (Table 3-2). Factors that influence the choice of delivery device include whether the patient is spontaneously breathing or requires assisted ventilation, the degree of oxygen desaturation, equipment availability and patient comfort.

#### Nasal Cannula

A nasal cannula is only suitable for use on a spontaneously breathing patient. The nasal cannula is commonly used for patients with only minor breathing difficulty or for those who have a history of respiratory disease and is useful for patients who cannot tolerate a face mask. Patients experiencing a serious breathing emergency generally breathe through the mouth and need a device that can supply a greater concentration of oxygen.

#### Simple Oxygen Face Mask

Simple oxygen masks can deliver high-flow oxygen. However, because room air is entrained through the side ports and, potentially, around the mask, delivered oxygen concentrations are in the range of 35% to 55%.

#### Non-Rebreather Mask

A non-rebreather mask is used to deliver high concentrations of oxygen to a breathing patient. The one-way valve prevents exhaled air from mixing with the oxygen in the reservoir bag. The patient inhales oxygen from the bag and exhaled air escapes through flutter valves on the side of the mask. To inflate the reservoir bag, occlude the one-way valve with your gloved thumb before placing the mask on the patient's face. The oxygen reservoir bag should be sufficiently inflated (about two-thirds full) so it does not deflate when the patient inhales. If the bag deflates, increase the flow rate of the oxygen to refill the reservoir bag.

## Bag-Valve-Mask Resuscitator

A BVM resuscitator can be used on a breathing or nonbreathing patient. A BVM resuscitator with an oxygen reservoir bag is capable of supplying an oxygen concentration of 90% or more when used at a flow rate of 15 L/min or more. As when using a non-rebreather mask, occlude the one-way valve before applying the mask to allow the reservoir to fill with oxygen.

## Pulse Oximetry

Oxygen therapy is typically titrated to achieve an oxygen saturation of 94% to 99% on pulse oximetry.

An oximeter consists of a clip-on probe with light-emitting diodes on one side and a light detector on the other. When the probe is placed on a finger, toe or earlobe, beams of red and infrared light are passed through the tissues to the light detector on the other side. Oxygenated hemoglobin absorbs more infrared light, allowing more red light to pass through, and deoxygenated hemoglobin absorbs more red light, allowing more infrared light to pass through. The ratio of red to infrared light that reaches the light detector is translated into a measurement of how much oxygen the blood is carrying, referred to as the peripheral capillary hemoglobin oxygen saturation, or SpO<sub>2</sub>.

To establish pulse oximetry monitoring:

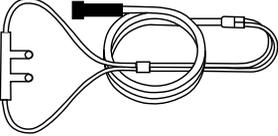
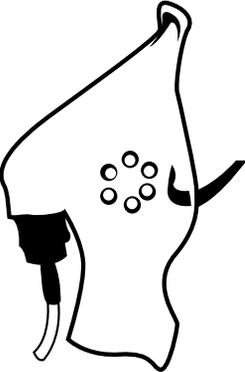
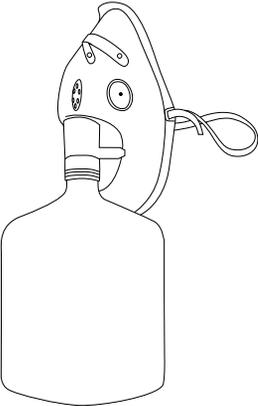
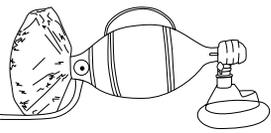
- Position an appropriately sized probe on a finger, toe or earlobe. If using a finger or toe, remove any nail polish from the nail. Avoid placing the probe on an extremity being used for blood pressure monitoring because cuff inflation will interfere with pulse oximetry readings.
- Connect the probe to the pulse oximeter and ensure that the probe is working by confirming that it is emitting a red light.
- After a few seconds, look for a pulse indicator or waveform on the monitor indicating that the probe has detected a pulse; otherwise, the reading will be inaccurate.



### Practice Note

Some factors may reduce the reliability of the pulse oximetry reading, including hypoperfusion (shock), cardiac arrest, excessive patient motion, carbon monoxide poisoning, hypothermia, sickle cell disease or anemia, a history of smoking and edema.

Table 3-2 | Oxygen Delivery Devices

Delivery Device	Description	Oxygen Flow Rate, L/min	Oxygen Concentration, %	Appropriate for
<p>Nasal cannula</p> <p>Low flow High flow</p> 	<p>Held in place over the patient's ears; oxygen is delivered through two small prongs inserted into the nostrils</p>	1–6	24–44	Breathing patients only
	<p>Pliable, dome-shaped mask that fits over the mouth and nose with an oxygen inlet and side ports to permit egress of exhaled gas</p>	6–15	35–55	Breathing patients only
	<p>Face mask with an attached oxygen reservoir bag and one-way valve between the mask and bag; patient inhales oxygen from the bag, and exhaled air escapes through flutter valves on the side of the mask</p>	10–15	Up to 90	Breathing patients only
	<p>Handheld breathing device consisting of a self-inflating bag, a one-way valve, a face mask and an oxygen reservoir bag</p>	≥ 15	≥ 90	Breathing and nonbreathing patients

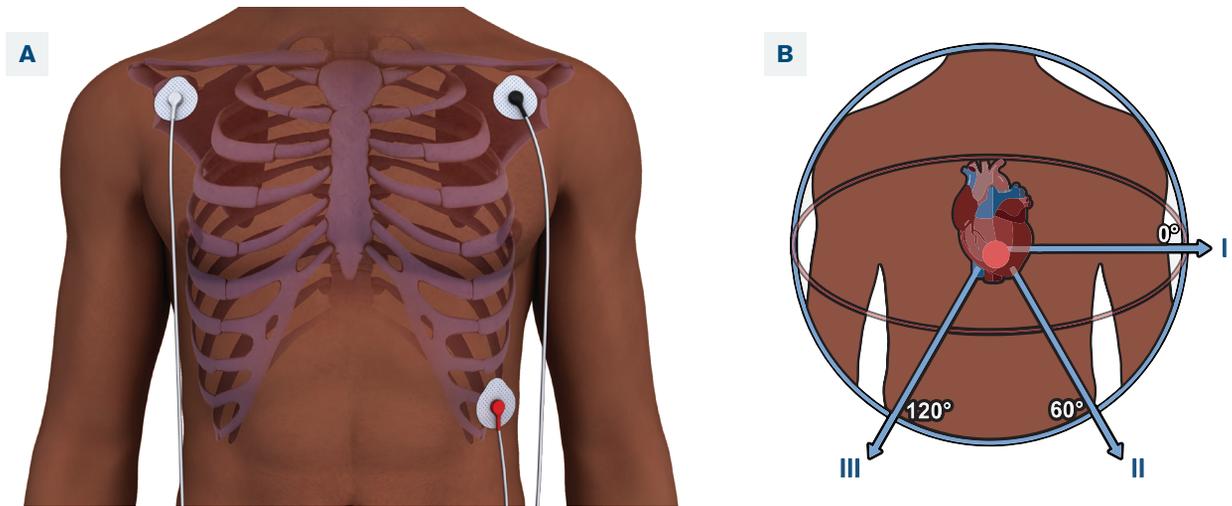


Figure 3-8 | Three-electrode system. (A) The white electrode is placed under the right clavicle at the midclavicular line, the black electrode is placed under the left clavicle at the midclavicular line, and the red electrode is placed on the lower left abdomen. (B) The three-electrode system allows monitoring of leads I, II and III.

## Cardiac Monitoring

For basic monitoring of heart rate and rhythm, most cardiac monitors/defibrillators use a three- or five-electrode system. A three-electrode system (Figure 3-8) permits monitoring of the bipolar limb leads (i.e., leads I, II and III). A five-electrode system (Figure 3-9) uses four limb electrodes and one chest electrode to provide seven views of the electrical activity of the heart. The four limb electrodes produce six leads in the frontal plane: I, II, III, augmented voltage of the right arm (aVR), augmented voltage of the left arm (aVL) and augmented voltage of the left foot (aVF). The chest electrode produces one lead in the horizontal plane:  $V_1$ .

### Practice Note

Most cardiac monitors/defibrillators have a wide range of functions, including continuous monitoring capabilities (e.g., heart rate and rhythm, blood pressure, pulse oximetry and capnography), diagnostic capabilities (i.e., 12-lead ECG) and therapeutic capabilities (i.e., modes for defibrillation, synchronized cardioversion and transcutaneous pacing). Make sure you are familiar with the features and functions of the equipment in use at your facility.

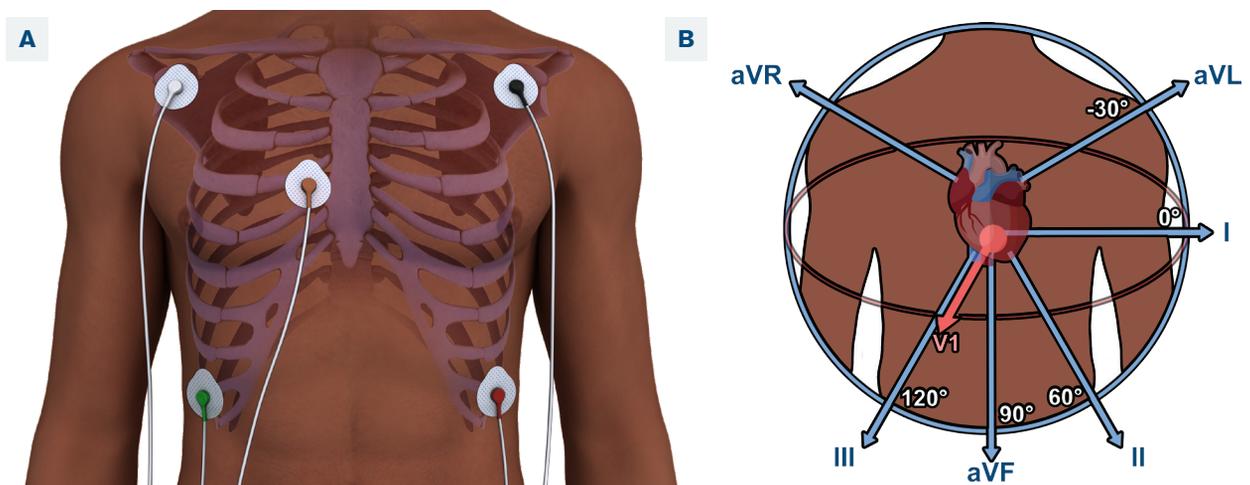


Figure 3-9 | Five-electrode system. (A) In addition to the electrodes placed for a three-electrode system, the brown electrode is placed in the fourth intercostal space along the right sternal border and the green electrode is placed on the lower right abdomen. (B) The five-electrode system allows monitoring of leads  $V_1$ , I, II, III, aVR, aVL and aVF.

## Electrocardiography

Most cardiac monitors/defibrillators can also be used to obtain a 12-lead ECG, which is necessary for accurately diagnosing arrhythmias, acute coronary syndromes (ACS) and other conditions affecting the electrical activity of the heart. The 12-lead ECG uses four limb electrodes and six chest electrodes to provide 12 views of the heart (Figure 3-10). The four limb electrodes produce six leads in the frontal plane: I, II, III, aVR, aVL

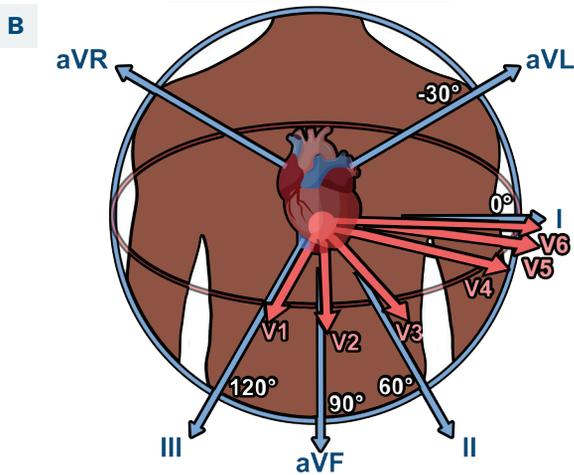


Figure 3-10 | The 12-lead ECG uses (A) four limb electrodes and six chest electrodes to provide (B) 12 views of the electrical activity of the heart.

and aVF. The six chest electrodes produce six leads in the horizontal plane:  $V_1$ ,  $V_2$ ,  $V_3$ ,  $V_4$ ,  $V_5$  and  $V_6$ . In some clinical situations, obtaining a 15-lead ECG may be necessary, which is done by obtaining a 12-lead ECG and then repositioning some of the electrodes to obtain the additional three views (Figure 3-11).

Preparing the skin where the electrodes will be placed is important to minimize artifact. The skin should be clean, dry and free of excess hair. In addition, proper electrode placement is essential for accurate rhythm identification. Misplacement of an electrode by as little as one intercostal space can cause waveform morphology to change, potentially leading to misdiagnosis.

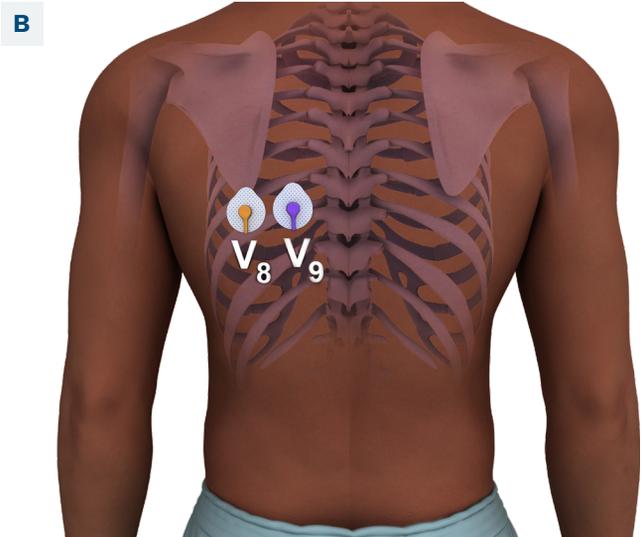
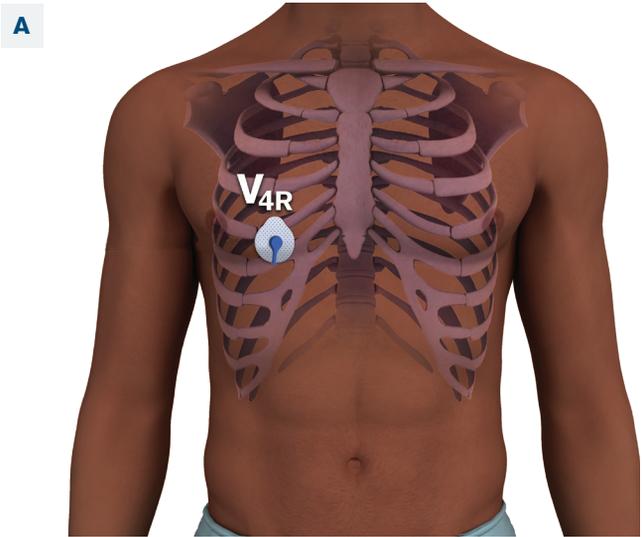


Figure 3-11 | The 15-lead ECG uses three additional electrodes to obtain three additional views of the heart. (A) Lead  $V_{4R}$  is placed over the fifth intercostal space at the midclavicular line on the right side. (B) Leads  $V_8$  and  $V_9$  are placed posteriorly.  $V_8$  is placed over the fifth intercostal space at the midscapular line on the left side and  $V_9$  is placed over the fifth intercostal space between  $V_8$  and the spine.

The *Placing Electrodes for Electrocardiography Skill Sheet* provides step-by-step guidance for placing electrodes for a 12-lead and 15-lead ECG.

## Electrical Therapies

Commonly used electrical therapies include manual defibrillation, synchronized cardioversion and transcutaneous pacing.

### Manual Defibrillation

Defibrillation is indicated for shockable cardiac arrest rhythms (i.e., ventricular fibrillation and pulseless ventricular tachycardia). Defibrillation involves the administration of direct-current electricity. The delivery of electricity is not synchronized in any way with the cardiac cycle. The electricity depolarizes the myocardial cells, making them unresponsive to abnormal pacemakers in the heart and ideally allowing the sinoatrial (SA) node to resume its normal pacemaker function, terminating the arrhythmia.

Electricity is delivered to the patient via two adhesive pads that contain a conductive gel layer. The conductive gel layer helps to overcome **transthoracic impedance** (the body's resistance to current flow that is caused by the thoracic structures, including soft tissue and bone, between the defibrillation pads and the heart) and minimizes the risk for burns.

The pads may be placed using anterolateral placement or anterior-posterior placement:

- **Anterolateral placement** (Figure 3-12A): Place the sternal pad on the patient's right side adjacent to the upper sternum, below the clavicle. Place the apical pad on the patient's left side over the fourth and fifth intercostal spaces, with the center of the pad at the midaxillary line.
- **Anterior-posterior placement** (Figure 3-12B): Place the anterior pad on the patient's left side over the fourth and fifth intercostal spaces, with the center of the pad at the midaxillary line. Place the posterior pad in the left infrascapular region.

The energy dose depends on the type of defibrillator.

- **If using a biphasic defibrillator**, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the initial dose (usually between 120 and 200 joules). Subsequent doses should be the same as or higher than the initial dose. If the manufacturer's recommendations for the initial dose are not known, use the highest energy dose available for the first and all subsequent shocks.

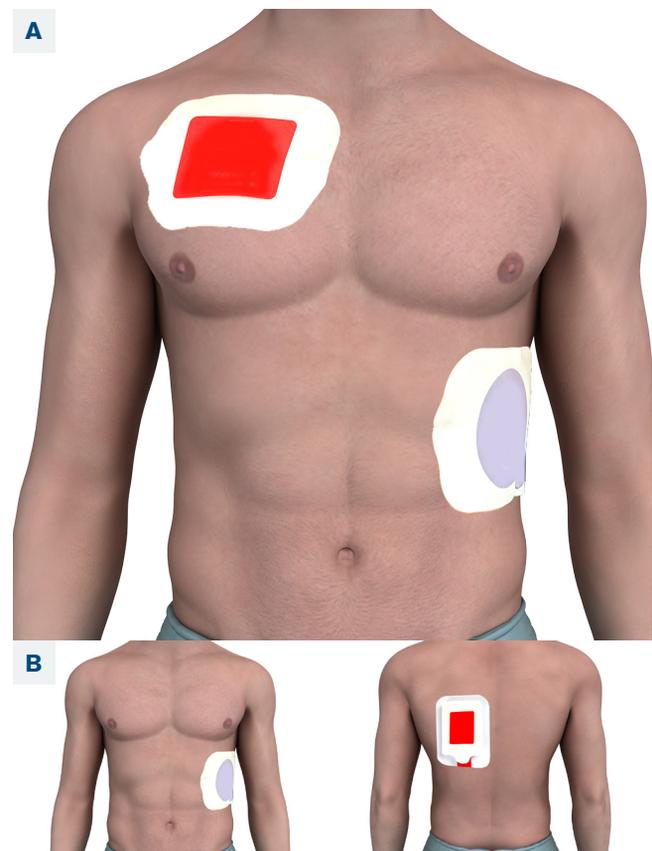


Figure 3-12 | Defibrillation pad placement. (A) Anterolateral placement. (B) Anterior-posterior placement.

- **If using a monophasic defibrillator**, set the energy dose at 360 joules. Use this energy dose for each subsequent shock.

#### Practice Note

To minimize interruptions to chest compressions, continue providing compressions while placing the pads on the patient's chest and charging the cardiac monitor/defibrillator.

#### Practice Note

Always precede the delivery of a shock by announcing the intention to shock in a clear, succinct manner. Before delivering a shock, perform a visual scan to ensure that no one is touching the patient, the bed or the stretcher and that oxygen delivery devices have been removed and set aside, away from the patient. When delivering the shock, continue to face the team, rather than the defibrillator.

The *Manual Defibrillation* Skill Sheet provides step-by-step guidance for manual defibrillation.

## Synchronized Cardioversion

Synchronized cardioversion is first-line therapy for patients with tachyarrhythmia with a pulse and signs of hemodynamic compromise and may also be indicated for refractory wide-complex tachyarrhythmia in patients without signs of hemodynamic compromise.

Synchronized cardioversion involves the delivery of a low dose of direct-current electricity that is timed to correlate with the peak of the R wave. This avoids delivery of electricity during the refractory phase of the cardiac cycle (represented by the T wave on the ECG), which could precipitate ventricular fibrillation or torsades de pointes.

As in defibrillation, a cardiac monitor/defibrillator is used for synchronized cardioversion, and shocks are delivered through adhesive pads placed on the patient's chest. However, the cardiac monitor/defibrillator must be set to synchronous mode (indicated by the appearance of sync markers at the top of each R wave on the monitor). Additionally,

it is necessary to press and *hold* the shock button until the shock is delivered. Table 3-3 summarizes the key differences between synchronized cardioversion and defibrillation.

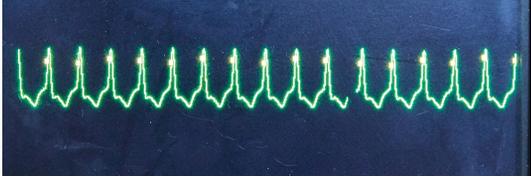
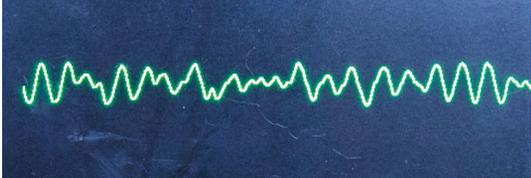
### Practice Note

If the sync markers are hard to see, try selecting another lead on the monitor.

Because synchronized cardioversion can be uncomfortable for the patient, administer sedation or analgesia unless the patient's condition is deteriorating rapidly. Energy doses depend on the arrhythmia and the type of defibrillator. After delivering the shock, reassess the rhythm and the patient:

- If the rhythm did not convert, reset the cardiac monitor/defibrillator to synchronous mode, increase the energy level in a stepwise fashion, charge the pads and deliver a shock.
- If the rhythm did convert, check the patient's vital signs and ensure adequate airway, breathing and circulation.

Table 3-3 | Key Differences Between Synchronized Cardioversion and Manual Defibrillation

Feature	Synchronized Cardioversion	Manual Defibrillation
Mechanism	<p>Delivery of electricity timed with QRS complex on ECG</p> 	<p>Delivery of electricity not timed with any part of the cardiac cycle</p> 
Indications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Tachyarrhythmias with a pulse and signs of hemodynamic compromise</li> <li>■ Refractory wide-complex tachyarrhythmia with a pulse and no hemodynamic compromise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ventricular fibrillation</li> <li>■ Pulseless ventricular tachycardia</li> </ul>
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Must select synchronous mode prior to delivering shock</li> <li>■ Must press and hold the shock button to deliver the shock</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ No need to select mode prior to delivering shock</li> <li>■ No need to hold the shock button to deliver the shock</li> </ul>



## Practice Note

Most cardiac monitor/defibrillators revert to defibrillation mode after delivering a shock. This is because cardioversion may induce ventricular fibrillation, in which case immediate defibrillation is necessary. Always ensure that the cardiac monitor/defibrillator is returned to synchronous mode before each subsequent attempt at synchronized cardioversion.

The *Synchronized Cardioversion* Skill Sheet provides step-by-step guidance for synchronized cardioversion.

## Transcutaneous Pacing

Transcutaneous pacing involves delivering an electrical current through the skin to stimulate the heart to contract. Transcutaneous pacing is indicated for patients with bradyarrhythmia and signs of hemodynamic compromise that is not responsive to pharmacologic therapy.

Like synchronized cardioversion, transcutaneous pacing can be uncomfortable for the patient, so administer sedation or analgesia if the patient's condition permits. Set the cardiac monitor/defibrillator to pacing mode, and then set the demand rate and the current milliamperes output. Gradually increase the current milliamperes output until electrical capture (wide QRS complexes and tall, broad T waves following each pacing spike) is observed on the monitor. Confirm mechanical capture by assessing the patient for clinical signs such as an improved peripheral pulse, an increase in blood pressure, an improved level of consciousness and improved skin color and temperature.

The *Transcutaneous Pacing* Skill Sheet provides step-by-step guidance for transcutaneous pacing.



## Practice Note

Check for a pulse using the right radial artery or the right or left femoral artery. During transcutaneous pacing, skeletal muscle contractions can mimic a pulse in the left radial artery or in the carotid arteries.

## Vascular Access

Quick access to the circulation is often needed for delivery of medications and other therapies and for sampling of blood. The best access technique is one that is rapid and does not interfere with CPR.

## Intravenous Access

Peripheral veins are commonly used for vascular access during emergencies. The best site for peripheral access is that which permits placement of the largest-diameter catheter possible without interfering with other resuscitative efforts, such as airway maneuvers or chest compressions. Common peripheral sites for intravenous (IV) catheter insertion include the large surface veins in the antecubital fossa and the dorsum of the hands and wrists.

Factors to consider when selecting the site for peripheral IV access include the duration of, and indication for, treatment, the types of solutions to be infused and vein availability.



## Practice Note

If upper extremity peripheral venous access cannot be achieved, consider central venous access (e.g., the femoral vein) or lower extremity peripheral venous access (e.g., the saphenous vein or the veins of the dorsum of the foot).

When administering IV therapies in an emergency, keep the following points in mind:

- Use the largest-diameter catheter possible (at least 18 gauge in an adult).
- Because strict aseptic technique may be breached during an emergency, replace the original catheter using strict aseptic technique after the patient is stabilized.
- Ensure that the extremity with IV access is at or above the level of the heart.
- When providing care for a patient in cardiac arrest, follow each peripherally administered drug dose with a 10- to 20-mL normal saline flush to ensure that the medication reaches the central circulation.
- Monitor the patient for local and systemic complications of IV therapy.

## Intraosseous Access

In emergency situations, intraosseous (IO) access should only be used for adults when IV access is unsuccessful or not feasible. IO access has been associated with lower rates of return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) and should not be used as first-line access.

IO access uses the bone marrow as the vascular space and typically involves a needle rather than a catheter. As with IV access, IO access can be used to administer medications, fluids and blood products and to collect blood

for laboratory analysis. Medication dosing is the same for IO and IV routes, and all medications administered to a patient in cardiac arrest should be followed by a 10- to 20-mL normal saline flush. Because the IO needle should not be left in place for more than 24 hours, IV access should be established as soon as possible, ideally within a few hours.

Sites for IO needle insertion vary according to the device used to achieve access (Table 3-4).

The most commonly used sites are the medial aspect of the anterior proximal tibia and the proximal humerus. These sites provide a flat surface with a relatively thin outer layer of bone, a large marrow cavity and easily identifiable landmarks to facilitate placement. Other sites for IO access include the distal femur, distal radius, anterior-superior iliac spine, medial malleolus and sternum.

IO needle placement should not be attempted in patients with bone fractures at the site or disorders that predispose to fracture (e.g., osteoporosis). Relative contraindications to IO needle placement include infection or burns of the overlying skin and previous attempts to establish access at the same IO access site; however, IO placement may still be considered in these instances when there is no other vascular access during an emergency.

IO needles can be inserted using a device (such as a drill or injection device) or manually (Figure 3-13). After insertion, monitor the insertion site and the extremity for swelling, which may indicate that the needle is out of place. Dislodging of the needle can lead to complications, including infection, medication or fluid

Table 3-4 | Sites for Intraosseous (IO) Access

	IO Drill	Bone Injection Device
Anterior proximal tibia (medial aspect)	X	X
Proximal humerus	X	X
Distal tibia	X	

extravasation and compartment syndrome. Remove the IO needle as soon as IV access can be established, ideally within a few hours.

The *Intraosseous Access (Drill)* Skill Sheet and the *Intraosseous Access (Manual Insertion)* Skill Sheet provide step-by-step guidance for achieving IO access using an IO drill and manually, respectively. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using a device to insert an IO needle.

## Fluid Therapy

Fluid resuscitation is often indicated for patients experiencing a cardiovascular emergency and as part of post-cardiac arrest care. Along with the use of vasoconstrictors or inotropic agents, the administration of fluids can help to maintain cardiac output, blood pressure and perfusion.

Isotonic crystalloid solutions, such as 0.9% normal saline or lactated Ringer's solution, are the primary solutions used for fluid resuscitation. Isotonic fluids are used

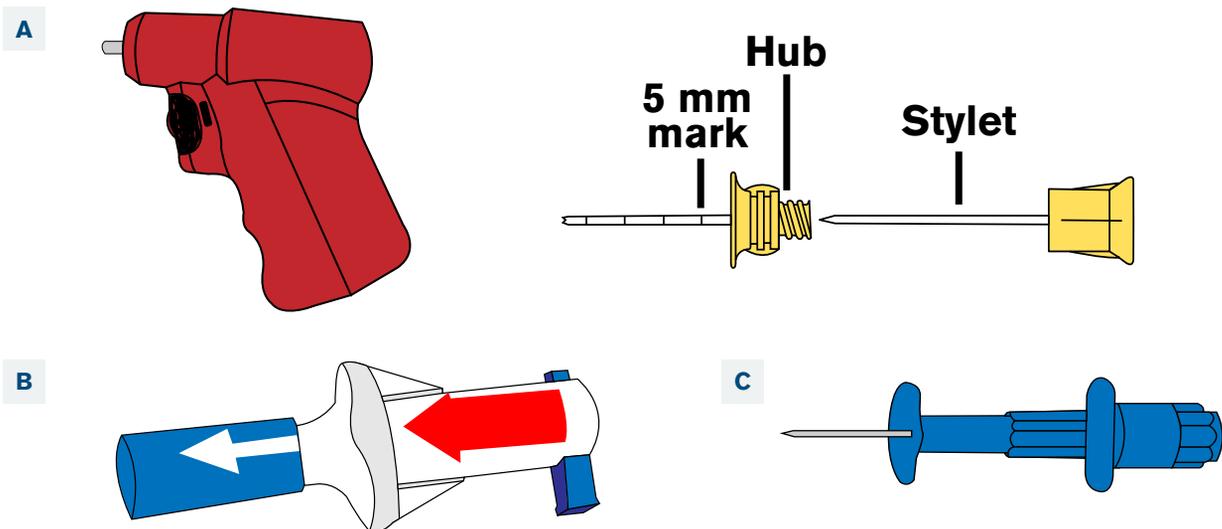


Figure 3-13 | Equipment for intraosseous (IO) access. (A) IO drill and needle. (B) Bone injection device. (C) Jamshidi needle for manual insertion.

instead of hypotonic fluids (e.g., 0.45% normal saline) because isotonic solutions allow a greater proportion of the administered volume to remain in the intravascular space. In most situations, normal saline and lactated Ringer's solution are equally effective options for fluid resuscitation. Because of the association between repeated normal saline boluses and hyperchloremic metabolic acidosis, which may obscure an ongoing or developing acidosis secondary to impaired tissue perfusion, use of a "balanced" solution such as lactated Ringer's solution may be preferred in some situations.

Colloid solutions, such as albumin, dextran and hydroxyethyl starch, may also be used for fluid resuscitation in shock. Historically, colloids were proposed to be a more effective option for fluid resuscitation than crystalloid solutions, based on the assumption that a greater proportion of colloid solution remains in the vascular space. However, this property appears to be

lost when capillary membranes are "leaky," as they are in various shock states.

Large peripheral IV catheters are adequate for most types of fluid resuscitation, as are central and IO catheters. Infusion pumps typically allow infusion of 1 liter of crystalloid solution in approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

## Drug Therapy

A good working knowledge of the drugs most commonly used in the management of cardiovascular, cerebrovascular and respiratory emergencies is essential. Table 3-5 summarizes the action, indications, administration and precautions for drugs that are commonly administered via the IV or IO route in resuscitation situations. Table 3-6 summarizes other drugs that are referenced throughout the course materials and their uses.

Table 3-5 | Commonly Used IV/IO Drugs in Resuscitation Situations

Drug	Action	Indications	Administration	Precautions
Adenosine	Slows conduction of impulses through the AV node	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Regular narrow-complex tachyarrhythmias/ no hemodynamic compromise</li> <li>■ Regular narrow-complex tachyarrhythmias/ hemodynamic compromise (do not delay cardioversion)</li> <li>■ Regular monomorphic wide-complex tachyarrhythmias/ no hemodynamic compromise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Has an extremely short half-life; administer over 1–2 s, at a site as close to the heart as possible</li> <li>■ 6 mg by rapid IV/IO push follow by 10- to 20-mL NS flush</li> <li>■ If not effective after 1–2 min, 12 mg by rapid IV/IO push followed by 10- to 20-mL NS flush</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Therapeutic effects can be blocked by the presence of caffeine or theophylline</li> <li>■ VF possible if adenosine is administered for unstable, irregular or polymorphic wide-complex tachycardias</li> <li>■ Can temporarily evoke a transiently slow ventricular rate or complete cessation of electrical activity; as drug is eliminated, electrical activity resumes</li> </ul>

Table 3-5 | Commonly Used IV/IO Drugs in Resuscitation Situations (continued)

Drug	Action	Indications	Administration	Precautions
Amiodarone	Class III antiarrhythmic; delays repolarization and prolongs the QT interval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shock-refractory VF/pVT</li> <li>Refractory tachyarrhythmia with a pulse/hemodynamic compromise</li> <li>Wide-complex tachyarrhythmia/no hemodynamic compromise</li> </ul>	<p>For VF/pVT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First dose: 300 mg IV/IO bolus</li> <li>Second dose: 150 mg after 3–5 min</li> </ul> <p>For tachyarrhythmia with a pulse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>150 mg IV over 10 min; may repeat as needed if arrhythmia recurs</li> <li>Maintenance infusion: 1 mg/min for first 6 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not use with other drugs that prolong QT interval</li> </ul>
Atropine	Blocks the effect of acetylcholine released by the vagus nerve at muscarinic receptors, thereby increasing the rate of firing of the SA node and conduction through the AV node	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bradycardia/hemodynamic compromise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 mg IV bolus every 3–5 min, up to a max dose of 3 mg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use in patients with acute coronary ischemia or myocardial infarction may have negative outcomes because of increased heart rate and myocardial oxygen demand</li> <li>IV/IO doses of less than 0.1 mg may cause paradoxical bradycardia</li> </ul>
Dopamine	Has positive chronotropic and inotropic effects, resulting in an increase in heart rate and contractility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bradycardia/hemodynamic compromise (second-line agent)</li> <li>After cardiac arrest</li> </ul>	<p>For bradycardia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5–20 mcg/kg/min titrated to effect</li> </ul> <p>For post-cardiac arrest care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5–20 mcg/kg/min IV/IO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can increase myocardial oxygen demand</li> <li>Can cause ventricular arrhythmias</li> </ul>

Table 3-5 | Commonly Used IV/IO Drugs in Resuscitation Situations (continued)

Drug	Action	Indications	Administration	Precautions
Epinephrine	Acts on both $\alpha$ - and $\beta$ -adrenergic receptors; induces systemic vasoconstriction and increases heart rate and contractility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cardiac arrest (VF, pVT, pulseless electrical activity, asystole)</li> <li>■ After cardiac arrest</li> <li>■ Bradyarrhythmia/hemodynamic compromise (second-line agent)</li> </ul>	<p>For VF/pVT/pulseless electrical activity/asystole:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1 mg IV/IO followed by 10- to 20-mL NS flush every 3–5 min</li> </ul> <p>For post–cardiac arrest care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 2–10 mcg/min IV/IO</li> </ul> <p>For bradyarrhythmia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 2–10 mcg/min titrated to effect</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> 1:1000 concentration = 1.0 mg/mL; 1:10,000 concentration = 0.1 mg/mL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased blood pressure, heart rate and myocardial oxygen demand may cause myocardial ischemia</li> </ul>
Lidocaine	Class Ib antiarrhythmic (sodium channel blocker); delays repolarization and slightly increases the QT interval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ VF/pVT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ First dose: 1–1.5 mg/kg IV/IO followed by 10- to 20-mL NS flush</li> <li>■ Subsequent doses: 0.5–0.75 mg/kg IV/IO followed by 10- to 20-mL NS flush every 5–10 min, up to a max dose of 3 mg/kg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Do not use prophylactically in patients with acute myocardial infarction</li> <li>■ Monitor patient for lidocaine toxicity</li> <li>■ Reduce maintenance dose in patients with hepatic disease or left ventricular dysfunction</li> <li>■ Do not alternate between amiodarone and lidocaine</li> </ul>
Naloxone	Competitively binds to $\mu$ -opioid receptors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Opioid overdose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 0.4–2 mg IV/IO/IM/IN/SC repeated every 2–3 min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ May precipitate opioid withdrawal syndrome (rarely life threatening)</li> </ul>
Norepinephrine	Acts on both $\alpha$ - and $\beta$ -adrenergic receptors to increase heart rate, contractility and vasoconstriction; increases systemic blood pressure and coronary blood flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ After cardiac arrest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 0.1–0.5 mcg/kg/min IV/IO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Potent vasoconstrictor; extravasation can lead to necrosis</li> </ul>

Table 3-5 | Commonly Used IV/IO Drugs in Resuscitation Situations (continued)

Drug	Action	Indications	Administration	Precautions
Procainamide	Class Ia antiarrhythmic (sodium channel blocker); delays repolarization and prolongs the QT interval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Refractory tachyarrhythmia with a pulse/ hemodynamic compromise</li> <li>■ Wide-complex tachyarrhythmia/ no hemodynamic compromise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 20–50 mg/min until arrhythmia is suppressed, hypotension develops, QRS duration increases by more than 50% or max dose of 17 mg/kg is given</li> <li>■ Maintenance infusion: 1–4 mg/min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ May induce torsades de pointes</li> <li>■ Avoid in prolonged QT or congestive heart failure</li> </ul>
Sotalol	Prolongs repolarization; also acts as a $\beta$ -blocker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Refractory tachyarrhythmia with a pulse/ hemodynamic compromise</li> <li>■ Wide-complex tachyarrhythmia/ no hemodynamic compromise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 100 mg (1.5 mg/kg) over 5 min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Avoid in prolonged QT</li> </ul>

Table 3-6 | Other Drugs Used in the Treatment of Cardiovascular and Cerebrovascular Disorders

Drug	Used for
Aspirin	Acute coronary syndromes, stroke
$\beta$ -Blockers (e.g., metoprolol, atenolol, propranolol, esmolol, labetalol)	Acute coronary syndromes, tachyarrhythmias, stroke
Bivalirudin	Acute coronary syndromes
Calcium channel blockers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Diltiazem</li> <li>■ Verapamil</li> <li>■ Nicardipine</li> <li>■ Clevidipine</li> </ul>	Tachyarrhythmias Tachyarrhythmias Stroke Stroke
Glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitors	Acute coronary syndromes
Anticoagulants (e.g., unfractionated heparin, enoxaparin, fondaparinux)	Acute coronary syndromes
Morphine	Acute coronary syndromes
Nitroglycerin	Acute coronary syndromes
Nitroprusside	Stroke
P2Y <sub>12</sub> inhibitors	Acute coronary syndromes
Tissue plasminogen activators	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recombinant tissue plasminogen activator (alteplase)</li> <li>■ Reteplase</li> <li>■ Tenecteplase</li> </ul>	Acute coronary syndromes, stroke Acute coronary syndromes Acute coronary syndromes

## SKILL SHEET

# Inserting an Oropharyngeal Airway (OPA)

### Step 1 Select the proper size

Measure the OPA from the corner of the patient's mouth to the angle of the jaw.



### Step 2 Open the patient's airway

Open the airway to a past-neutral position using the head-tilt/chin-lift technique, or use the modified jaw-thrust maneuver.

### Step 3 Open the patient's mouth

Open the patient's mouth using the cross-finger technique.



## SKILL SHEET

# Inserting an Oropharyngeal Airway (OPA) *(continued)*

### Step 4 Insert the OPA

- Insert the OPA upside down, with the tip pointing up.
- As the tip approaches the posterior pharynx, rotate the OPA 180 degrees into the proper position.



### Step 5 Ensure correct placement

The flange should rest on the patient's lips.



## SKILL SHEET

# Inserting a Nasopharyngeal Airway (NPA)

### Step 1 Select the proper size

- Select an NPA that is smaller in diameter than the inner aperture of the patient's nostril.
- Measure the NPA from the nostril to the angle of the jaw.



### Step 2 Apply a water-soluble lubricant

Lubricate the NPA and the opening of the nostril.



## SKILL SHEET

# Inserting a Nasopharyngeal Airway (NPA) *(continued)*

### Step 3 Insert the NPA

- **Right nostril:** Insert the NPA with the bevel toward the septum. Gently advance the NPA straight in, following the floor of the nose and avoiding excessive force.
- **Left nostril:** Insert the NPA with the bevel toward the septum. Gently advance the NPA, rotating it as you advance it past the nasal cavity.



### Step 4 Ensure correct placement

The flange should rest on the nostril.



## SKILL SHEET

# Using a Bag-Valve-Mask (BVM) Resuscitator—One Provider

### Step 1 Select an appropriately sized resuscitator \_\_\_\_\_

The mask should not cover the patient's eyes or extend below the patient's chin. Assemble the equipment as needed.

### Step 2 Place the mask \_\_\_\_\_

Position yourself behind the patient's head (cephalic position). Place the mask at the bridge of the nose and then lower it over the nose, mouth and chin.

### Step 3 Seal the mask and open the airway \_\_\_\_\_

- Place one hand around the mask, forming a C with your thumb and index finger around the side of the mask and an E with the last three fingers under the patient's jaw.
- Simultaneously seal the mask and open the airway to the past-neutral position by lifting the patient's jaw up into the mask.



### Step 4 Provide ventilations \_\_\_\_\_

- While maintaining the mask seal and an open airway with one hand, use the other hand to depress the bag about halfway to deliver a tidal volume of 400 to 700 mL.
- Watch for chest rise.
- Continue providing smooth and effortless ventilations that last about 1 second and cause the chest to just begin to rise.

## SKILL SHEET

# Using a Bag-Valve-Mask (BVM) Resuscitator—Two Providers

### Step 1 Select an appropriately sized resuscitator \_\_\_\_\_

The mask should not cover the patient's eyes or extend below the patient's chin. Assemble the equipment as needed.

### Step 2 Place the mask \_\_\_\_\_

Provider 1 gets into position behind the patient's head (cephalic position). Provider 1 places the mask at the bridge of the nose and then lowers it over the nose, mouth and chin.

### Step 3 Seal the mask and open the airway \_\_\_\_\_

Provider 1:

- Places both hands around the mask, forming a C with the thumb and index finger around the sides of the mask and an E with the last three fingers of each hand under the patient's jaw.
- Simultaneously seals the mask and opens the airway to the past-neutral position by lifting the patient's jaw up into the mask.



### Step 4 Provide ventilations \_\_\_\_\_

- Provider 1 maintains the mask seal and an open airway.
- Provider 2 depresses the bag about halfway to deliver a tidal volume of 400 to 700 mL. Provider 2 provides smooth and effortless ventilations that last about 1 second and cause the chest to just begin to rise.
- Both providers watch for chest rise.

## SKILL SHEET

# Placing Electrodes for Electrocardiography

## 12-Lead ECG

### Step 1 Prepare the skin where the electrodes will be placed

- Make sure the skin is clean, dry and free of excess hair.
- Using a skin prep pad, gently abrade the skin to remove dead skin cells.



### Step 2 Prepare equipment

Attach electrodes to the cables.



### Step 3 Apply the limb electrodes

- On the arms, place the electrodes between the shoulders and the elbows.
- On the legs, place the electrodes on the thighs or calves, avoiding bony areas.



## SKILL SHEET

# Placing Electrodes for Electrocardiography (*continued*)

### Step 4 Apply the chest electrodes

- **V<sub>1</sub>**: Palpate the jugular notch, then palpate down to identify the sternal angle (angle of Louis), which is adjacent to the second rib. Palpate along the right sternal border to identify the second, third and fourth intercostal spaces. Place the electrode for V<sub>1</sub> over the fourth intercostal space at the right sternal border.
- **V<sub>2</sub>**: Place the electrode for V<sub>2</sub> over the fourth intercostal space at the left sternal border.
- **V<sub>4</sub>**: Place the electrode for V<sub>4</sub> over the fifth intercostal space at the midclavicular line on the patient's left side.
- **V<sub>3</sub>**: Place the electrode for V<sub>3</sub> halfway between electrodes V<sub>2</sub> and V<sub>4</sub>.
- **V<sub>5</sub>**: Place the electrode for V<sub>5</sub> at the anterior axillary line on the patient's left side, even with electrode V<sub>4</sub>.
- **V<sub>6</sub>**: Place the electrode for V<sub>6</sub> at the midaxillary line on the patient's left side, even with electrodes V<sub>4</sub> and V<sub>5</sub>.



**Note:** If necessary, lift breast tissue to place electrodes as close to the chest wall as possible.

## 15-Lead ECG

### Step 1 Obtain a 12-lead ECG

Run a standard 12-lead ECG.

## SKILL SHEET

# Placing Electrodes for Electrocardiography (*continued*)

### Step 2 Place additional electrodes

- **V<sub>4R</sub>**: Place the electrode for V<sub>4R</sub> over the fifth intercostal space at the midclavicular line on the patient's right side.
- **V<sub>8</sub>**: Place the electrode for V<sub>8</sub> over the fifth intercostal space at the midscapular line on the patient's left side.
- **V<sub>9</sub>**: Place the electrode for V<sub>9</sub> over the fifth intercostal space between V<sub>8</sub> and the spine.



### Step 3 Move cables to obtain additional views

Detach the cables for leads V<sub>4</sub>, V<sub>5</sub> and V<sub>6</sub>.

- Place the cable from V<sub>4</sub> on V<sub>4R</sub>.
- Place the cable from V<sub>5</sub> on V<sub>8</sub>.
- Place the cable from V<sub>6</sub> on V<sub>9</sub>.



### Step 4 Obtain a second 12-lead ECG

- Run a second 12-lead ECG to capture the three additional leads.
- Re-label the three additional leads on the rhythm strip.

## SKILL SHEET

# Manual Defibrillation

### Step 1 Select appropriately sized pads

Choose the largest adult pad available.

### Step 2 Apply the pads to the patient's chest

Apply the pads to the patient's chest, pressing firmly and making good skin contact.

- **Anterolateral placement:** Place the sternal pad on the patient's right side adjacent to the upper sternum, below the clavicle. Place the apical pad on the patient's left side over the fourth and fifth intercostal spaces, with the center of the pad at the midaxillary line.
- **Anterior-posterior placement:** Place the anterior pad on the patient's left side over the fourth and fifth intercostal spaces, with the center of the pad at the midaxillary line. Place the posterior pad in the left infrascapular region.



### Step 3 Set the energy dose

- **Biphasic defibrillator:** Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the initial dose (usually between 120 and 200 joules). Subsequent doses should be the same as or higher than the initial dose. If the manufacturer's recommendations for the initial dose are not known, use the highest energy dose available for the first and all subsequent shocks.
- **Monophasic defibrillator:** Set the energy dose at 360 joules. Use this energy dose for each subsequent shock.



### Step 4 Charge the pads

Press the "charge" button on the cardiac monitor/defibrillator.

## SKILL SHEET

### Manual Defibrillation *(continued)*

#### Step 5 Deliver the shock

- Instruct the team to “clear.”
- Conduct a visual check to ensure that no one is touching the patient or the bed/stretchers and that oxygen delivery devices have been removed and set aside, away from the patient.
- Press the “shock” button on the cardiac monitor/defibrillator to deliver the shock.



#### Step 6 Resume CPR

Immediately resume CPR and then reassess the rhythm in 2 minutes. If a shockable rhythm persists, deliver another shock, using an energy dose that is the same as or higher than the initial dose.

## SKILL SHEET

# Synchronized Cardioversion

### Step 1 Identify the rhythm

Attach the cardiac monitoring leads and ensure that the patient's cardiac rhythm is shown on the monitor.

### Step 2 Select appropriately sized pads

Choose the largest adult pad available.

### Step 3 Apply the pads to the patient's chest

Apply the pads to the patient's chest, pressing firmly and making good skin contact.

- **Anterolateral placement:** Place the sternal pad on the patient's right side adjacent to the upper sternum, below the clavicle. Place the apical pad on the patient's left side over the fourth and fifth intercostal spaces, with the center of the pad at the midaxillary line.
- **Anterior-posterior placement:** Place the anterior pad on the patient's left side over the fourth and fifth intercostal spaces, with the center of the pad at the midaxillary line. Place the posterior pad in the left infrascapular region.

### Step 4 Select synchronous mode

Verify that sync markers are visible at the top of each R wave.



## SKILL SHEET

# Synchronized Cardioversion (*continued*)

### Step 5 Set the energy dose

- Use the device manufacturer's recommended energy dose for the type of rhythm.



### Step 6 Charge the pads

Press the “charge” button on the cardiac monitor/defibrillator.

### Step 7 Deliver the shock

- Instruct the team to “clear.”
- Conduct a visual check to ensure that no one is touching the patient or the bed/stretcher and that oxygen delivery devices have been removed and set aside, away from the patient.
- Press and hold the “shock” button on the cardiac monitor/defibrillator to deliver the shock.



### Step 8 Reassess

Reassess the rhythm and the patient.

- If the rhythm did not convert, reset the cardiac monitor/defibrillator to synchronous mode, increase the energy level in a stepwise fashion, charge the pads and deliver a shock.
- If the rhythm did convert, check the patient's vital signs and ensure adequate airway, breathing and circulation.



## SKILL SHEET

# Transcutaneous Pacing

### Step 1 Identify the rhythm

Attach the cardiac monitoring leads and ensure that the patient's cardiac rhythm is shown on the monitor.



### Step 2 Apply the pacing pads to the patient's chest

Apply the pacing pads to the patient's chest, pressing firmly and making good skin contact.

- **Anterolateral placement:** Place the sternal pad on the patient's right side adjacent to the upper sternum, below the clavicle. Place the apical pad on the patient's left side over the fourth and fifth intercostal spaces, with the center of the pad at the midaxillary line.
- **Anterior-posterior placement:** Place the anterior pad on the patient's left side over the fourth and fifth intercostal spaces, with the center of the pad at the midaxillary line. Place the posterior pad in the left infrascapular region.

### Step 3 Select pacing mode

Set the cardiac monitor/defibrillator to pacing mode.



## SKILL SHEET

# Transcutaneous Pacing *(continued)*

### Step 4 Set the demand rate

Set the demand rate to approximately 60 beats per minute. Once pacing is established, the demand rate can be adjusted according to the patient's clinical response.



### Step 5 Set the current milliamperes output

Set the current milliamperes output by starting low and gradually increasing it until consistent electrical capture is observed on the monitor (wide QRS complexes with tall, broad T waves).



### Step 6 Check for mechanical capture

Check for mechanical capture (evidenced by clinical signs such as an improved peripheral pulse and an increase in blood pressure).

## SKILL SHEET

# Intraosseous Access (Drill)

### Step 1 Stabilize the target site

Stabilize the target site on a firm surface.

### Step 2 Select the correct needle size

Palpate the site to determine tissue depth.



### Step 3 Disinfect the skin

Disinfect the skin overlying the insertion site.



### Step 4 Consider pain control

If the patient is awake, consider infiltration of the skin and periosteum with 1% lidocaine.

### Step 5 Attach the needle

Attach the needle to the IO drill.

## SKILL SHEET

# Intraosseous Access (Drill) *(continued)*

### Step 6 Position the needle

Aim the IO drill with the needle at a 90-degree angle to the insertion site. Push the needle through the skin until the tip is against the bone. The 5-mm mark on the needle must be visible above the skin when the needle is resting on the bone.



### Step 7 Drill the needle into the bone

Pressing the trigger on the device, lightly drill the needle into the bone until you feel a decrease in resistance.



### Step 8 Remove the drill

Hold the needle securely in place as you pull the drill straight off. When inserted correctly, the needle should feel like it is firmly in the bone and should remain upright without support.



## SKILL SHEET

# Intraosseous Access (Drill) *(continued)*

### Step 9 Remove the stylet

Remove the stylet by twisting it counterclockwise, and dispose of it properly.



### Step 10 Position the stabilizer dressing

Place the stabilizer dressing over the needle.



### Step 11 Attach the primed tubing

Hold the needle securely and attach the primed tubing to the needle.



## SKILL SHEET

# Intraosseous Access (Drill) *(continued)*

### Step 12 Confirm placement

Confirm correct placement of the needle by using one of the following methods:

- Aspirate bone marrow or blood through the needle.
- Flush the needle with a small amount of saline and check for extravasation.
- Administer fluids by free flow through the needle.



### Step 13 Secure the dressing

Peel the adhesive tabs off the stabilizer dressing and press the dressing firmly onto the skin.



### Step 14 Monitor the insertion site

Monitor the insertion site and the extremity for swelling.

## SKILL SHEET

# Intraosseous Access (Manual Insertion)

### Step 1 Stabilize the target site

Stabilize the target site on a firm surface.

### Step 2 Select the correct needle size

Palpate the site to determine tissue depth.



### Step 3 Disinfect the skin

Disinfect the skin overlying the insertion site.

### Step 4 Consider pain control

If the patient is awake, consider infiltration of the skin and periosteum with 1% lidocaine.

### Step 5 Position the needle

Position the needle at a 90-degree angle to the insertion site.  
Push the needle through the skin until the tip is against the bone.



## SKILL SHEET

# Intraosseous Access (Manual Insertion) *(continued)*

### Step 6 Insert the needle into the bone

Once the needle reaches the periosteum, apply pressure in a back-and-forth twisting motion until you feel a decrease in resistance. When inserted correctly, the needle should feel like it is firmly in the bone and should remain upright without support.



### Step 7 Remove the stylet

Remove the stylet by twisting it counterclockwise, and dispose of it properly.



### Step 8 Attach the primed tubing

Hold the needle securely and attach the primed tubing to the needle.



### Step 9 Confirm placement

Confirm correct placement of the needle by using one of the following methods:

- Aspirate bone marrow or blood through the needle.
- Flush the needle with a small amount of saline and check for extravasation.
- Administer fluids by free flow through the needle.

## SKILL SHEET

# Intraosseous Access (Manual Insertion) *(continued)*

### Step 10 Secure the needle

Tape the flange to the skin and add a gauze dressing for support.



### Step 11 Monitor the insertion site

Monitor the insertion site and the extremity for swelling.





## Working Well Together in an Emergency

### Introduction

Working well together as a team when caring for a patient experiencing a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency is vital. Poor teamwork can lead to poor outcomes in emergency situations. Conversely, effective teamwork can be the difference between life and death for the patient who requires emergency care.

## Rapid Response and Resuscitation Teams

Many healthcare facilities have implemented systems designed to improve patient outcomes by decreasing the likelihood of cardiopulmonary arrest in unstable patients and reducing mortality when cardiopulmonary arrest does occur. These systems rely on teams of highly trained and skilled personnel, known as rapid response teams and resuscitation teams. The goal of the **rapid response team** is to intervene quickly and effectively to address the warning signs of impending cardiopulmonary arrest so that the arrest can be prevented. The goal of the **resuscitation team** is to respond quickly and effectively to provide advanced life support care to a patient in respiratory or cardiac arrest.

Patients in respiratory distress or shock tend to decompensate quickly, and respiratory and cardiac arrest may result. In critical care settings such as a critical care unit or emergency department, highly trained teams are already in place and advanced life support care will be implemented quickly. However, patients outside of these settings are also at risk for experiencing respiratory or cardiac arrest. Thus all healthcare providers should be trained to recognize early signs of clinical deterioration in patients and should know how to initiate the emergency response as quickly as possible.

### Rapid Response Systems

Rapid response systems became commonly integrated in hospitals in the mid-2000s as a response to the 100,000 Lives Campaign initiated by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, which aimed to reduce the percentage of preventable in-hospital deaths. Today, all hospitals in the United States are required by the Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals to have a system in place to better recognize and respond to significant changes in a patient's status. Thus, all hospitals, and some other types of healthcare facilities, have some form of a rapid response system in place. Rapid response teams (also called multidisciplinary medical emergency teams) work together to care for the patient when signs and symptoms of cardiopulmonary compromise or shock are noted (Figure 4-1). The specific composition of the team may vary, but generally rapid response teams include critical care nurses, respiratory therapists, and a critical care physician or hospitalist, nurse practitioner or physician assistant. No matter the composition of the team, the goal of every rapid response team is to



Figure 4-1 | Rapid response teams intervene early to prevent a patient's condition from worsening.

quickly address the symptoms and underlying cause when a patient is in distress to *prevent* the occurrence of respiratory or cardiac arrest.

Any healthcare provider can call for a rapid response team; often the nurse providing direct patient care makes the call. Regardless, guidelines are always in place for calling a team. Each facility uses its own, often very specific, criteria to activate the rapid response system. These criteria may be called “triggers,” or an early warning score system may be used. In general, the rapid response system would be activated for the following reasons:

- An acute change in respiratory rate, pattern or status from baseline (especially acute onset or worsening respiratory distress)
- Airway compromise
- A respiratory rate greater than 28 breaths/min or less than 8 breaths/min
- An oxygen saturation less than 90% despite supplementation
- A heart rate greater than 140 bpm or less than 40 bpm
- A systolic blood pressure greater than 180 mmHg or less than 90 mmHg
- An acute change in urine output or a urine output of less than 50 mL over 4 hours
- An acute change in mental status
- An acute change in pain status (or uncontrolled pain)
- Seizure activity (new onset or prolonged)
- Staff or family concern

## Resuscitation Teams

Resuscitation teams, like rapid response teams, are multidisciplinary teams of highly trained and skilled healthcare professionals. Team members may vary, but teams often include a critical care physician, a critical care nurse, a respiratory therapist, a hospitalist, a pharmacist and a chaplain. The goal of the resuscitation team is singular and focused: to provide resuscitative care when a patient experiences respiratory or cardiac arrest (Figure 4-2).

## Functioning as a Team

Healthcare providers on rapid response and resuscitation teams must work together in a coordinated effort to achieve the best possible outcomes for each patient. **Teamwork** refers to a group of people with well-defined roles and responsibilities working toward a common goal. Teamwork is crucial during rapid response and resuscitation because the ultimate goal is to save a life, and effective team care requires a coordinated effort by the team leader and the team members.

To achieve the best possible outcomes, every team leader and team member must exhibit key skills including communication, critical thinking and problem solving. Implementing effective and efficient teamwork and exhibiting these critical key skills allows the team to respond efficiently and effectively, and it improves patient outcomes.



Figure 4-2 | The resuscitation team provides resuscitative care to patients in cardiac or respiratory arrest.

## Communication

Communication is essential when caring for a patient who is experiencing a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency. You need to communicate with your colleagues, the patient and the patient's family.

Communication involves four essential components (Figure 4-3):

- **Sender:** The person initiating the communication
- **Message:** The content of the communication; this must be expressed clearly so that everyone involved knows exactly what the message is
- **Receiver:** The person for whom the message is intended
- **Feedback:** The confirmation by the receiver that the message is received and understood; an essential element of **closed-loop communication**

Communication includes spoken words (verbal messages) and nonverbal messages conveyed through body language, such as gestures and facial expressions.

## Communicating with the Team

The foundation of effective teamwork is clear and effective communication among team members. When a team is working to provide care, a designated team leader directs the efforts of the other team members. When communicating information or assigning tasks to team members, the team leader must be sure to speak clearly and deliberately, to convey information in an organized fashion and to “close the loop” by waiting for feedback from the team member responsible for carrying out the action. If feedback is not provided, the team leader should seek it before continuing. Similarly, team members must provide confirmation that they have received the message and that they understand it by repeating the task back to the team leader and acknowledging initiation and completion of the

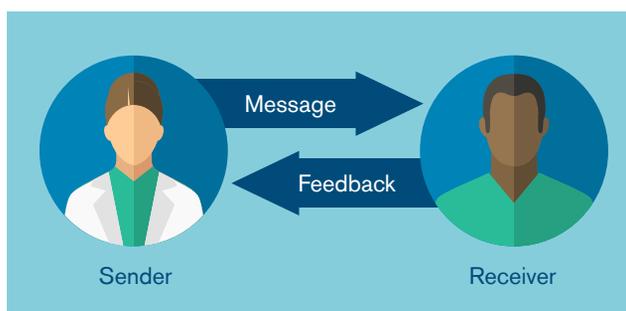


Figure 4-3 | Clear communication among team members is essential. The sender initiates the communication, sending a clear message. The receiver provides feedback, confirming that the message was understood and the task has been completed.

task. No matter what your role is on the team, speak clearly in a calm tone of voice, and take care not to speak over others.

## Communicating with the Family

Patients who require resuscitation are unresponsive, making communication with the family very important. Remember, during emergencies, families are stressed and may not always hear what you are saying. Speak slowly and in terms the family can understand. Build rapport and establish trust. Be prepared to repeat information, if necessary. Be open and honest, especially about the patient's condition. Minimize family members' fears, as necessary, but avoid giving misleading information or false hope. Reassure the family that everything that can be done is being done. In doing so, you need to demonstrate credibility and trustworthiness, confidence and empathy.

In advanced life support situations, patients may not survive, despite the team's best resuscitation efforts. As a healthcare provider, you may be involved in communicating with the family about a patient's death. In this situation:

- Provide information honestly and with compassion, in a straightforward manner, and include information about events that may follow.
- Allow the family to begin processing the information.
- Allow time for the family to begin the grief process. Ask whether they would like to contact or have you contact anyone, such as other family members or clergy.
- Anticipate emotional reactions, which may include crying, sobbing, shouting, anger, screaming or physically lashing out.
- Wait and answer any questions that the family may have.

## Critical Thinking

**Critical thinking** refers to thinking clearly and rationally to identify the connection between information and actions. When you use critical thinking, you are constantly identifying new information, adapting to the information logically in order to determine your best next actions and anticipating how those actions will affect the patient.

Critical thinking is an essential skill in healthcare and especially in advanced life support situations. You use critical thinking when you:

- Obtain an initial impression.
- Determine a course of action.
- Anticipate roles and functions as part of a team based on the patient's presentation and condition.

- Consistently re-evaluate the situation for changes, interpret these changes and apply them to the patient's care and treatment.
- Modify your actions based on the changes you observe.

## Problem Solving

**Problem solving** refers to the ability to use readily available resources to find solutions to challenging or complex situations or issues that arise. In emergency situations, problems or issues can occur at any point. For example, a team member may be unable to find a vein adequate for achieving vascular access. Another emergency might occur, leaving the team short-staffed. An upset family member may interfere with care.

Problem solving also requires creativity in finding solutions. Use whatever resources are at hand, including equipment, other team members or other healthcare facility staff.

## Working as a High-Performance Team

Your role on an advanced life support team may vary according to your training and areas of expertise. In addition to understanding your own role on the team, it is important to understand the roles of other team members as well. This knowledge will help you function effectively in an advanced life support situation.

Members of effective teams keep their skills and knowledge current, and they practice together regularly (Figure 4-4A). In addition, effective teams hold debriefing sessions after each resuscitation event (Figure 4-4B). The debriefing session is an opportunity to review successes, as well as areas where improvement is needed.

## Team Leader Responsibilities

The team leader oversees the entire emergency situation and organizes and runs the response. The team leader does not perform a particular task but is responsible for making sure all team members perform necessary tasks according to their roles. The coordination of all involved is necessary to:

- Ensure that everyone works as a team to help promote the best possible outcome for the patient.
- Promote effective perfusion to vital organs.
- Minimize interruptions of chest compressions, which improves patient survival.



Figure 4-4 | Effective teams (A) practice together regularly and (B) hold debriefing sessions after every resuscitation event.

The team leader:

- Assigns and understands team roles.
- Sets clear expectations.
- Prioritizes, directs and acts decisively.
- Encourages and allows team input and interaction.
- Focuses on the big picture.
- Monitors performance while providing support.
- Acts as a role model.
- Coaches the team.
- Re-evaluates and summarizes progress.
- Facilitates a debriefing session.

## Team Member Responsibilities

Team members provide care with skill and expertise.

Team members:

- Have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their assigned role.
- Stay in their assigned role but assist others as needed, as long as they are able to maintain their own assigned responsibilities.
- Communicate effectively with the team leader if they:
  - Feel they are lacking any knowledge or skills.
  - Identify something that the team leader may have overlooked.
  - Recognize a dangerous situation or need for urgent action.
- Share information with other team members.
- Focus on achieving the goals.
- Ask pertinent questions and share pertinent observations.
- Participate in the debriefing session.

## Coordinated Team Response

When the team leader and all of the team members, in their assigned roles, work together as a high-performance team, expert care is delivered and outcomes are improved. In a highly effective team working together in an emergency situation, the team leader will assign the team roles. These roles may differ according to healthcare facility policy. A typical six-person high-performance resuscitation team includes team members who perform CPR/defibrillator roles, as well as team members who perform leadership and supportive roles (Figure 4-5). All team members should be trained and able to perform multiple roles on the team, within their scope of practice.

### CPR/Defibrillator Roles

The CPR/defibrillator roles include the following:

- **Compressor.** One team member is responsible for chest compressions.
- **AED/defibrillator operator.** One team member is responsible for managing the AED or defibrillator and for establishing any other monitoring. This team member also relieves the team member who is giving compressions.
- **Airway manager/ventilator.** One team member is responsible for managing the airway and providing ventilations. A trained respiratory therapist, if available, would fill this role.

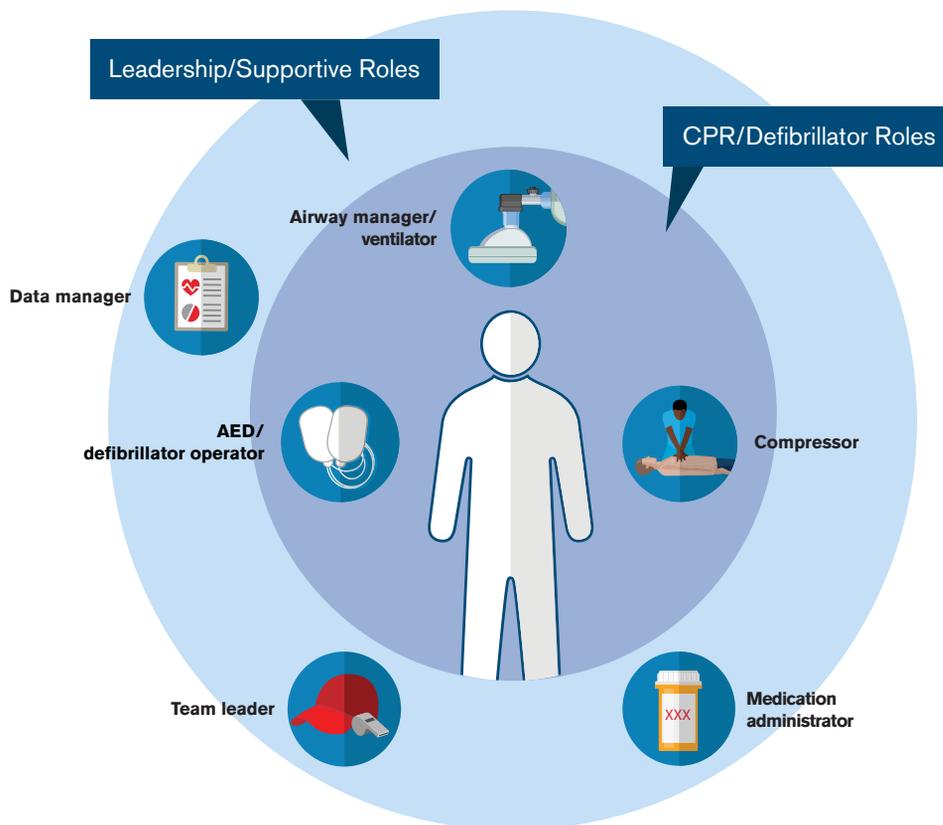


Figure 4-5 | A resuscitation team usually includes six people.

## Leadership and Supportive Roles

The leadership and supportive roles include the following:

- **Team leader.** One team member functions as the team leader.
- **Medication administrator.** One team member is responsible for establishing vascular access and administering medications.
- **Data manager.** One team member is responsible for keeping track of elapsed time and communicating and recording key data during the resuscitation effort, such as the nature and timing of interventions.

## Crew Resource Management

**Crew resource management** is a concept that helps to promote effective and efficient teamwork and reduce the likelihood of errors. Originally developed by the aviation industry in the 1970s in response to several airline disasters where human error and poor communication were found to be contributing factors, crew resource management has been adapted for use as a tool in the healthcare setting as well. Crew resource management emphasizes using all available resources (including people, equipment and procedures) to reduce the likelihood of human error and promote effective and

efficient teamwork. When following the principles of crew resource management, all members of the team demonstrate respect for one another and use clear, closed-loop communication.

Crew resource management centers around the team leader, who coordinates the actions and activities of team members so that the team functions effectively and efficiently. For example, when team members switch roles during an emergency, the team leader is responsible for coordinating these activities. Crew resource management also guides team members to communicate directly and effectively with the team leader about dangerous or time-critical decisions. Being a member of the team is just as important as being a team leader. Everyone on the team needs to have a voice and be encouraged to speak up if a problem arises. When a problem arises, team members must get the attention of the team leader, state their concern, describe the problem as they see it and suggest a solution. The team leader then provides direction, enabling the team to work together to resolve the issue.

## Phased Response Approach

The **phased response approach**, first introduced in 1987 by Burkle and Rice, can be used to describe

the process of a resuscitation team in action during a resuscitation event. The phased response approach refers to how a group of people, working as a team, reacts to and handles an emergency using crew resource management and the key skills of communication, critical thinking and problem solving. This response approach consists of seven phases.

## Anticipation

In the anticipation phase, the team leader gathers any preliminary information about the emergency (e.g., the patient's age and present illness, significant medical history, and events leading up to the emergency) and plans for the resuscitation or emergency response by assigning team roles and gathering the equipment needed to handle the situation. If the emergency care will take place in a location other than where the team is located, the leader and team members go the site of the emergency as quickly as possible.

## Entry

In this phase, the patient is brought to the emergency department or the team arrives at the patient's location in the healthcare facility. The team members assess the patient and collect vital signs, transfer the patient as needed (e.g., from bed to bed) and ensure that the patient is positioned properly for the emergency interventions taking place. One team member quickly and efficiently obtains information from the person who identified the emergency and called for "the code."

## Resuscitation

Resuscitation is the most critical phase of the approach. During this phase, the team leader directs the team members to perform actions per therapeutic protocols; communication is essential in this phase. The team members must also report any changes in the patient's clinical condition, such as changes in heart rhythm, decreasing oxygen saturation or changes in blood pressure. If resuscitation efforts are successful, a patient in cardiac arrest will achieve return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC).

## Maintenance

In the maintenance phase, the team focuses on stabilizing the patient's vital signs and using intelligent intuition to predict any potential problems that may occur. The primary assessment is repeated during this phase, any required laboratory samples are collected and the care provided is documented. If the patient must be transferred, preparation for the transfer takes place in this phase.

## Family Notification

Although listed as a phase, family notification is actually an ongoing process throughout the resuscitation or emergency care event. Ideally, one member of the team is dedicated to this role so that family members are kept informed throughout the process.

## Transfer

After the rapid response team, the resuscitation team or both provide care, the patient is likely to be transferred to a critical care unit or other unit capable of providing specialized care. The team leader, with input from the team members, determines the appropriate level of care required for each situation.

## Debrief

As soon as possible after the resuscitation is over, the team should review their performance. The debriefing session is an opportunity to reflect on and analyze the care that was provided and to learn from mistakes, as well as successes. The purpose of the debriefing session is not to place blame; rather, it is to take a closer look at the decisions that were made and the actions that were taken with the goal of identifying opportunities for improvement at the system, team and individual level. The debriefing phase is also a time for team members to decompress. Some resuscitations can be very traumatic or emotionally laborious; this phase can be a time for the team to grieve.

The team leader leads the debriefing session, which typically follows a consistent format. For example:

- **Review:** The team leader provides a brief recap of the emergency and the interventions that were used.
- **Analyze:** The team reviews and evaluates the objective data obtained during the resuscitation effort.
- **Reflect:** The team reflects on the actions they took and why, discusses the pros and cons of those actions and identifies changes that could be made to improve future outcomes.
- **Summarize:** The team recaps the main takeaway points and develops a list of action items.



### Practice Note

Participating in a resuscitation effort, even a successful one, can have a psychological impact on team members. Mental health treatment provided by a qualified mental health professional can benefit providers following a resuscitation or other stressful event.





# Assessment

## Introduction

The data you gather through ongoing assessment of the patient informs the decisions that you make in order to provide appropriate care. Taking a systematic approach to assessment allows you and the team to focus on identifying and addressing the most critical problems first, and helps to ensure that important details about the patient's condition and underlying causes are not overlooked.

## Assess, Recognize and Care

Assess, Recognize and Care (ARC) is a concept that describes the ongoing process of gathering data about the patient's condition, using that data to identify a problem and then intervening to address the problem (Figure 5-1). Because an acutely ill patient's condition can change rapidly (for better or for worse), you must continuously assess the patient, recognize what is happening with the patient and provide care accordingly.

### Assess

Assessment is the process of gathering the data that helps you to determine what is happening with the patient. In order to ensure that the most pressing problems are addressed first, take a phased, systematic approach to assessment: perform a rapid assessment, a primary assessment and (when the patient's condition allows) a secondary assessment. In an emergency situation, assessment is ongoing.

### Recognize

After you gather assessment data, use critical thinking, your past clinical experience and your general knowledge to correctly interpret the meaning of the data and gain an understanding of the patient's clinical

situation and care needs. This understanding enables you to determine your next steps.

### Care

Based on your understanding of the patient's condition, implement appropriate care. Without effective assessment and accurate recognition of the patient's condition, proper care cannot be provided.

## Systematic Approach to Assessment

A systematic approach to assessment includes a rapid assessment, a primary assessment and a secondary assessment. The *Adult Systematic Assessment Code Card* summarizes the approach to systematic assessment of an adult.

### Rapid Assessment

The rapid assessment is a quick survey to ensure safety, form an initial impression about the patient's condition (including looking for life-threatening bleeding), and determine the need for additional resources.

You can gain a great deal of preliminary information very quickly just by looking at the patient. For example:

- Does the patient appear to be unresponsive?
- Is the patient speaking?
- Does the patient appear to be working to breathe?
- Does the patient's skin appear to be its normal color, or does it seem pale, ashen, cyanotic or flushed?
- Does the patient appear to be diaphoretic?
- Is there any fluid or blood coming from, on or near the patient?
- Is there life-threatening bleeding?

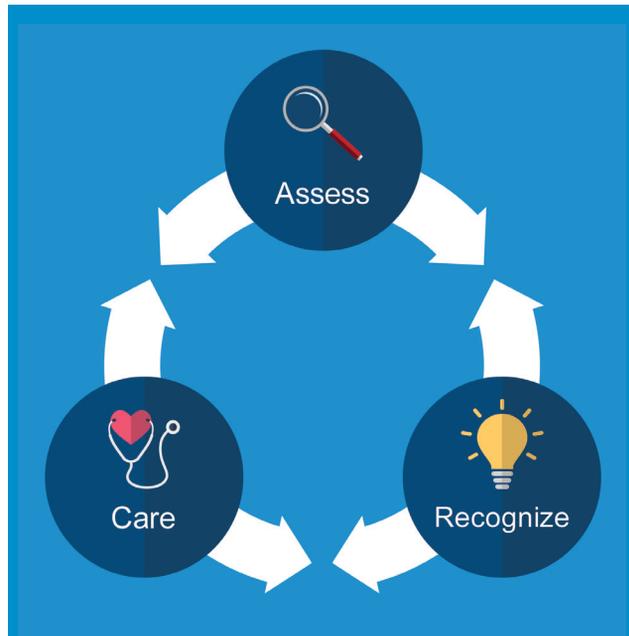


Figure 5-1 | Assess, Recognize and Care (ARC) is a concept that describes the ongoing process of gathering data about the patient's condition, using that data to identify a problem, and then intervening to address the problem.

#### Practice Note

If you see life-threatening bleeding immediately use any available resources to control the hemorrhage, including a tourniquet or hemostatic dressing if one is available.

If the patient appears to be unresponsive, check for responsiveness.

## Responsive Patient

If the patient is responsive, perform the primary assessment and provide emergent/initial interventions. Position the patient as appropriate for their clinical condition, and perform the secondary assessment as the patient's condition allows. Continually reassess the patient, recognize issues and provide care as needed.

## Unresponsive Patient

If the patient is unresponsive, call for additional resources, the rapid response or resuscitation team and the resuscitation equipment or cart. Simultaneously check for breathing and a central pulse for no more than 10 seconds. While completing the breathing and pulse check, look a second time for life-threatening bleeding. Quickly scan down the patient's body, looking for blood or other signs of life-threatening bleeding that you might not have seen initially.



### Practice Note

Remember A-B-C: open the airway (A), check for the presence or absence of normal breathing (B), and simultaneously assess for circulation (C) by doing a pulse check.

Provide care based on your findings.

- If the patient is not breathing (or only has gasping breaths) and there is no pulse present, provide care for cardiac arrest. Begin CPR immediately.
- If the patient is not breathing or ventilation is ineffective but there is a pulse, provide care for respiratory arrest or failure. Ensure an adequate airway and support oxygenation and ventilation as needed with bag-valve-mask (BVM)-assisted ventilation, noninvasive ventilation or invasive ventilation. Perform the primary assessment and provide emergent/initial interventions. Position the patient as appropriate for their clinical condition, and then perform a secondary assessment as the patient's condition allows. Continually reassess the patient, recognize issues and provide care as needed.
- If the patient is breathing and there is a pulse, perform a primary assessment and provide emergent/initial interventions. Position the patient as appropriate for their clinical condition, and perform the secondary assessment as the patient's condition allows. Continually reassess the patient, recognize issues and provide care as needed.

## Primary Assessment

The primary assessment structures the approach to patient assessment around the mnemonic ABCDE (Airway, Breathing, Circulation, Disability, Exposure). The goal of the primary assessment is to identify potentially life-threatening conditions and correct them immediately, in order to prevent the patient's condition from deteriorating further (Figure 5-2). Provide interventions as needed and as resources permit, delegating care to appropriate team members as needed.

### Airway

Assess airway patency and maintainability. If the patient is able to speak to you in a normal voice, then the airway is patent. Signs that the upper airway may not be patent include:

- Abnormal sounds (e.g., stridor, wheezing, gurgling or snoring).
- An obstruction or foreign body (including secretions, blood or vomit) in the upper airway.
- Increased work of breathing or respiratory distress (e.g., nasal flaring, retractions).
- Altered level of consciousness.
- Cyanosis.

If the patient's airway is not open and clear, patency must be restored immediately and maintained. Methods of ensuring and maintaining a patent airway include:

- Patient positioning.
- Manual maneuvers, such as the head-tilt/chin-lift technique and the jaw-thrust maneuver.



Figure 5-2 | During the primary assessment, assessment and intervention take place concurrently to identify and address potentially life-threatening problems related to airway, breathing, circulation, disability (neurologic status) and exposure.

- Techniques for clearing an airway obstruction (e.g., abdominal thrusts or foreign body removal using forceps with direct laryngoscopy).
- Suctioning.
- Placement of an oropharyngeal airway (OPA) or nasopharyngeal airway (NPA).
- Placement of an advanced airway.

If placement of an advanced airway is indicated, confirm proper placement using capnography and secure the device to prevent it from becoming dislodged.

## Breathing

Assess breathing rate, depth and rhythm and observe for chest rise. Auscultate for the presence or absence of breath sounds, the presence of abnormal breath sounds (e.g., wheezes, rales, rhonchi or stridor) and for bilateral equality. Establish pulse oximetry to monitor oxygen saturation and if necessary, provide the minimal level of supplemental oxygen needed to maintain an oxygen saturation of at least 94% but not more than 99%. Establish capnography to monitor the adequacy of ventilation. End-tidal carbon dioxide (ETCO<sub>2</sub>) values in the range of 35 to 45 mmHg confirm adequacy of ventilation. If necessary, support ventilation with BVM-assisted ventilation, noninvasive ventilation or invasive ventilation.

## Circulation

Assess the pulse rate, quality and rhythm, and establish cardiac monitoring. Assess the adequacy of perfusion by assessing blood pressure and capillary refill time, assessing for signs of shock and noting skin color, appearance and temperature. Signs of compromised perfusion include a prolonged capillary refill time (greater than 2 seconds); cool, pale or cyanotic skin in the extremities; an altered level of consciousness; and abnormally low ETCO<sub>2</sub> readings (i.e., less than 30 mmHg). If time and resources permit, obtain a 12-lead ECG.

Determine whether the patient needs defibrillation, cardioversion or pacing. Establish vascular access for the administration of fluids, medications or both.

## Practice Note

Capnography allows rapid, objective and reliable assessment of airway, breathing and circulation. An ETCO<sub>2</sub> value in the normal range and a square waveform indicates that the patient's airway, breathing and circulation are intact:

- There is no obstruction to carbon dioxide emptying.
- Ventilation is adequate. An ETCO<sub>2</sub> value in the normal range correlates closely with the arterial pressure of carbon dioxide (PaCO<sub>2</sub>), which means that ventilation is adequate.
- Perfusion is adequate. In low-perfusion states, it is impossible to achieve a normal ETCO<sub>2</sub> value.

## Disability

Perform quick assessments to gain information about the patient's neurologic status:

- Assess the patient's level of consciousness using the AVPU (Alert, Verbal responsive, Pain responsive, Unresponsive) model:
  - **Awake:** The patient is fully awake (but may still be confused).
  - **Verbal responsive:** The patient responds to verbal stimuli.
  - **Pain responsive:** The patient responds to painful stimuli (e.g., a tap on the shoulder).
  - **Unresponsive:** The patient does not respond to any stimuli.
- Assess orientation to person, place and time.
- Check the pupils for size, equality and reactivity to light.
- Measure the patient's blood glucose level. Hypoglycemia can cause changes in level of consciousness and is easily corrected.
- If stroke is suspected, conduct a neurologic examination using the National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) or similar assessment tool.

## Exposure

As the last step of the primary assessment, check the patient's body for obvious signs of injury or illness, such as bleeding, bruises, rashes and deformities. Note skin color, appearance and temperature. Remove clothing as needed to inspect the head, ears, face, and neck; the anterior and posterior trunk; and the upper and lower extremities. If the patient has a suspected head, neck, spinal or pelvic injury, remember to consider spinal motion restriction while turning the patient over.



## Practice Note

Older adults do not thermoregulate as well as younger adults; they can lose core body temperature much faster when their skin is exposed. Be sure to keep the areas not being actively assessed covered.



## Practice Note

Bruises at various stages of healing or an inconsistent patient history or a history that does not align with the presenting injuries may indicate nonaccidental trauma. Follow your local and institutional policies for reporting suspected abuse.

## Secondary Assessment

When the patient's condition has been stabilized, perform a secondary assessment. The secondary assessment includes a focused history, a focused physical examination and diagnostic tests. The goal of the secondary assessment is to gather more detailed information that will allow you to narrow the list of differential diagnoses and discover underlying, treatable causes (Figure 5-3).

### Focused History

The focused history can be obtained by collecting data following the SAMPLE mnemonic:

**S:** Signs and symptoms

**A:** Allergies

**M:** Medications



Figure 5-3 | During the secondary assessment, conducted after the patient has been stabilized, information is gathered with the aim of narrowing the differential diagnosis list, identifying underlying causes and determining candidacy for planned interventions.

**P:** Past medical history

**L:** Last intake and output

**E:** Events

### Signs and Symptoms

Interview the patient (and, if necessary, family members or other healthcare providers) to identify signs and symptoms that occurred at the onset of the illness or injury. Ask follow-up questions as needed. For example, if the patient reports pain, ask the patient where the pain is located, when the pain started, and what the pain feels like.

### Allergies

Determine whether the patient has any known allergies to medications, foods, latex, or environmental items. If the patient does report an allergy, ask what type of reaction the patient had in the past when exposed to the allergen, and what care the patient received. Even if the patient does not report an allergy, inquire about possible exposures to substances that are known to be allergens or toxins.

### Medications

Check what medications the patient is taking. This includes prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal supplements and any “home remedies.” Also explore the possibility of unintentional poisoning in a confused older adult or when polypharmacy may be a concern.

### Past Medical History

Ask about hospitalizations, surgeries, previous illnesses and significant chronic diseases that may be pertinent to the patient's current illness. Also inquire about nutritional status and immunization status.

### Last Intake and Output

Establish when the patient last had something to eat or drink, either by mouth or via enteral feeding. Accurately establishing the time of the last intake is important because the risk for aspiration may be increased with some advanced treatment interventions, such as intubation or general anesthesia. Note other pertinent details about the patient's last intake, such as the amount, the patient's willingness to eat or drink, and whether or not the patient was having difficulty with eating or drinking. Finally, ask about any changes that could cause fluid imbalance, such as changes in urination or bowel elimination, vomiting, significant bleeding or fever.

## Events

Gather details about the patient's activities prior to the onset of signs and symptoms. Note the time between the events leading up to the patient's illness or injury and the onset of signs and symptoms. Also note any treatments the patient may have received prior to arriving at the healthcare facility.

## Focused Physical Examination

The information gathered from the rapid and primary assessments, as well as the focused history, will assist you in determining the primary area of concern and the extent of the focused physical assessment. For example, if the primary area of concern is respiratory, then the areas of focus may include the head, neck and chest. In addition to completing a focused physical exam, a complete head-to-toe assessment should also be performed.

## Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests may be ordered to:

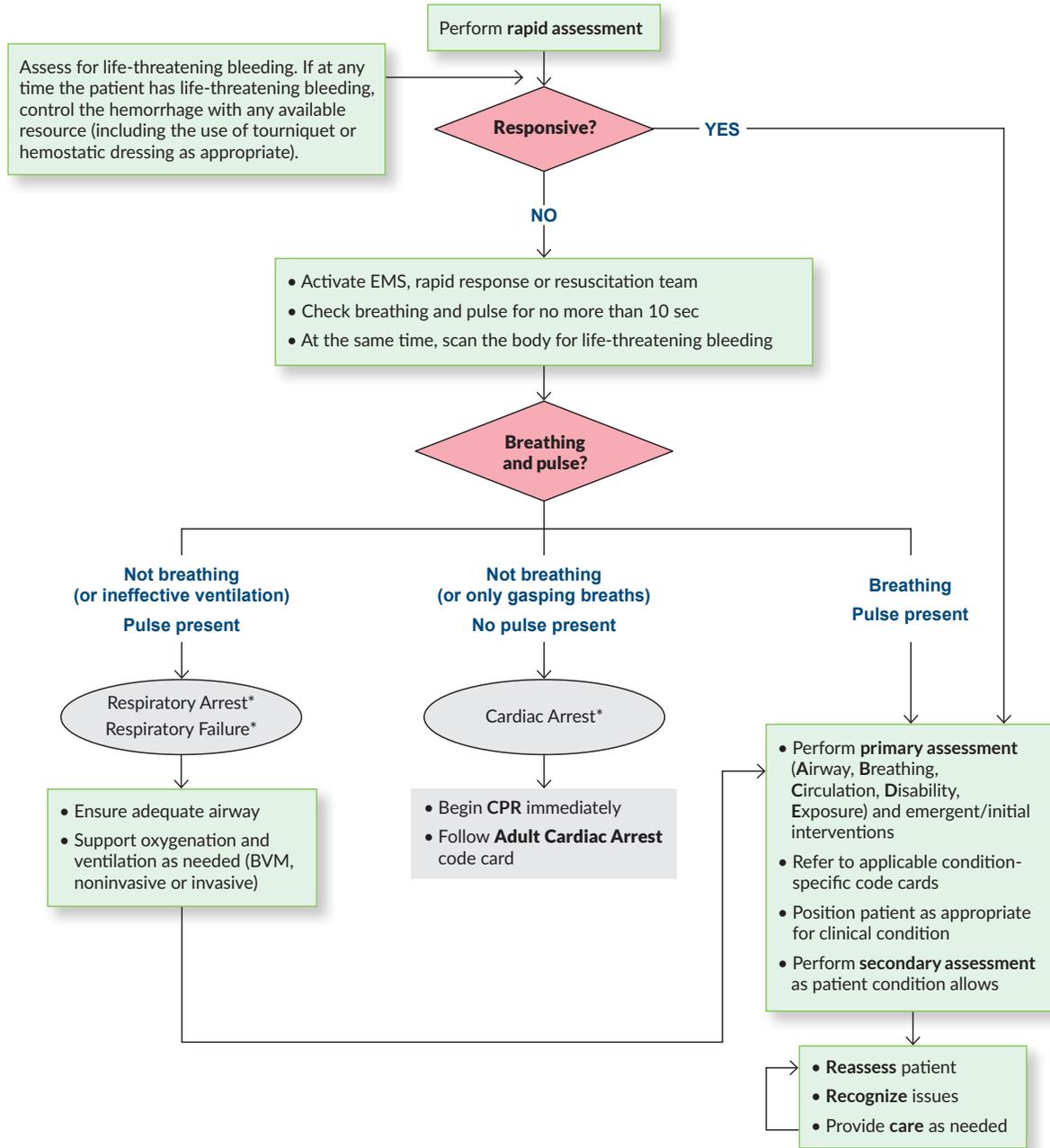
- Assist in identifying underlying causes, including potentially reversible causes.
- Narrow the list of differential diagnoses.
- Aid in determining candidacy for, or contraindications to, planned therapeutic interventions.

The following diagnostic tests are often indicated in the evaluation of patients experiencing a cardiovascular, cerebrovascular or respiratory emergency:

- **Blood tests**, including arterial blood gases (ABGs), a complete blood count (CBC), an electrolyte panel, a blood glucose level, coagulation studies, a lipid profile, serum cardiac markers and toxicology screens.
- **Imaging studies**, including chest radiography, computed tomography (CT) of the chest or brain, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the brain, vascular imaging of the brain and ultrasound of the chest.
- **Electrocardiography** (12-lead).

# ADULT SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT

ALS - 2020 VERSION



\*As appropriate, follow condition-specific code cards.







# Respiratory Emergencies

## Introduction

A patient who is having difficulty breathing requires immediate care. Respiratory distress can quickly progress to respiratory failure, respiratory arrest and cardiac arrest.

# Respiratory Anatomy and Physiology

The overall function of the respiratory system is to provide the body's cells with oxygen and to remove the byproduct of cellular metabolism, carbon dioxide. **Respiration** (the process of moving oxygen and carbon dioxide between the atmosphere and the body's cells) includes **ventilation** (the mechanical process of moving air into and out of the body) and **gas exchange** (the molecular process of adding oxygen to, and removing carbon dioxide from, the blood). Effective respiration relies on effective functioning of the respiratory system, the cardiovascular system and the nervous system.

## Respiratory System Anatomy

The respiratory system includes the upper and lower airways, the lungs and the muscles of respiration, including the diaphragm and intercostal muscles (Figure 6-1).

### Upper Airway

The upper airway consists of the nasal passages, pharynx, larynx and upper portion of the trachea, and ends at the level of the thoracic inlet.

The pharynx has three regions (see Figure 6-1), the:

- **Nasopharynx**, which extends from the base of the skull to the soft palate and is located posterior to the nasal cavities.
- **Oropharynx**, which extends from the hard palate to the level of the hyoid bone and is located posterior to the oral cavity.
- **Laryngopharynx (hypopharynx)**, which extends from the oropharynx to the level of the cricoid cartilage.

The larynx contains the vocal cords, is covered by the **epiglottis** (a leaf-shaped cartilaginous structure that closes over the opening of the larynx during the act of swallowing) and is supported by the thyroid and cricoid cartilages. The larynx serves as the “gatekeeper” between the upper and lower airways. The structures of the upper airway can be categorized according to where they lie in relation to the larynx (see Figure 6-1):

- **Supraglottic**: used to describe structures above the larynx (e.g., the nasal and oral cavities, the nasopharynx and oropharynx)
- **Glottic**: variably used to describe the space between the vocal cords or the structures surrounding the larynx
- **Subglottic**: used to describe structures below the larynx (i.e., the upper portion of the trachea)

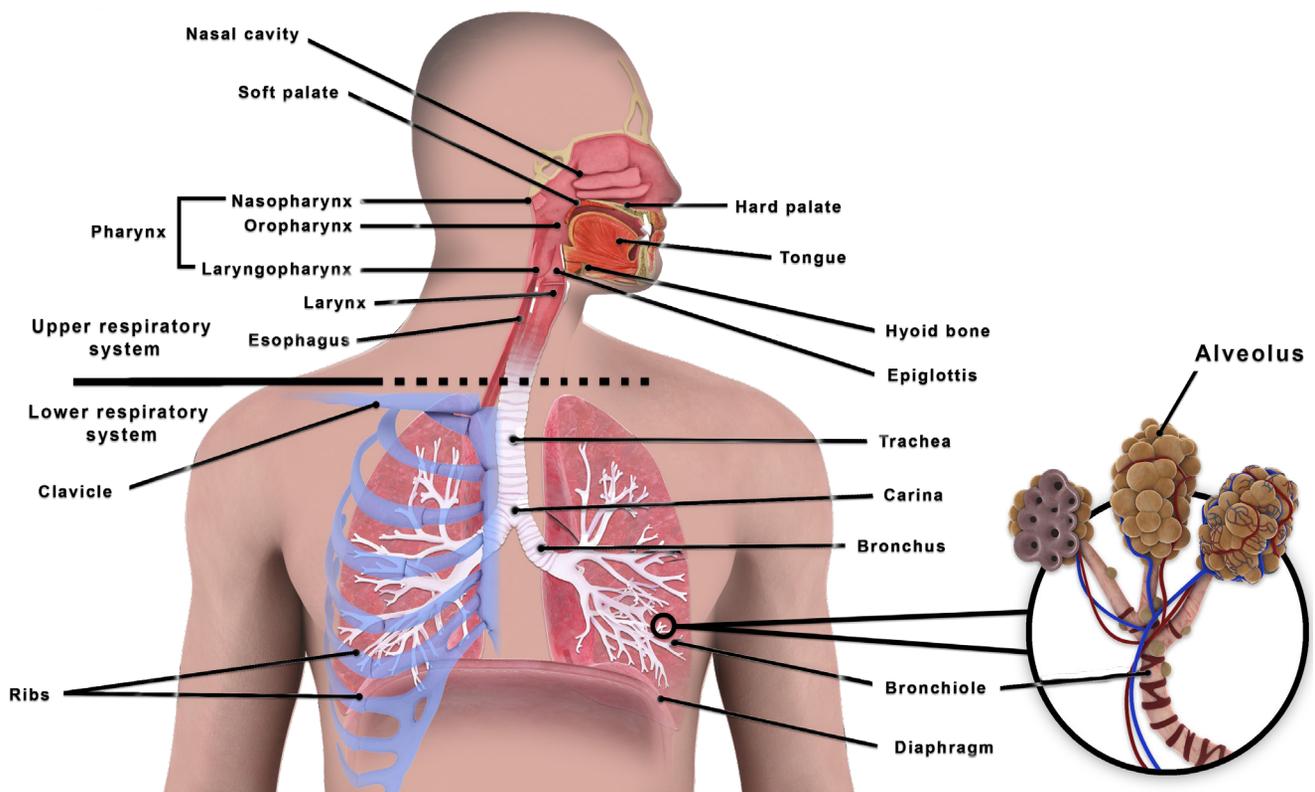


Figure 6-1 | The respiratory system

## Lower Airway

The lower airway encompasses the lower trachea, bronchi, bronchioles and alveoli (see Figure 6-1). The trachea, bronchi and bronchioles serve as conduits for the air entering and leaving the lungs. The trachea, which is supported by C-shaped rings of cartilage, extends from the larynx to the **carina** (i.e., the point where the trachea bifurcates into the right and left main bronchi). The right mainstem bronchus has three intrapulmonary branches, whereas the left mainstem bronchus has two, corresponding with the number of lobes on each side. Once inside the lobes of the lungs, the bronchi divide into progressively narrower branches, called bronchioles.



### Practice Note

The right mainstem bronchus is more vertically oriented relative to the trachea, whereas the left mainstem bronchus is more horizontally oriented. Additionally, the left mainstem bronchus is short and narrow, and the right mainstem bronchus is comparatively longer and wider. These anatomical features make the right mainstem bronchus easier to access and increase the risk for its accidental intubation.

Alveoli, located at the very end of the smallest bronchioles, are arranged into clusters and surrounded by a rich network of capillaries. The alveoli provide a thin surface for gas exchange between the lungs and the blood (Figure 6-2). The walls of the alveoli contain elastin fibers that allow them to stretch and then return to their normal shape. The inside of the alveolar membrane is coated with surfactant, which allows reinflation and prevents **atelectasis** (alveolar collapse).

## Respiratory Physiology

Respiration involves the processes of ventilation and gas exchange.

### Ventilation

The diaphragm is the primary muscle responsible for ventilation. On inspiration, the diaphragm contracts downward, increasing space for lung expansion. The external intercostal muscles, located between the ribs, synergistically act with the diaphragm during inspiration to expand the rib cage. When ventilation demands increase, the body recruits accessory muscles for assistance. The sternocleidomastoid, scalene and upper trapezius muscles are the body's accessory muscles of inspiration.

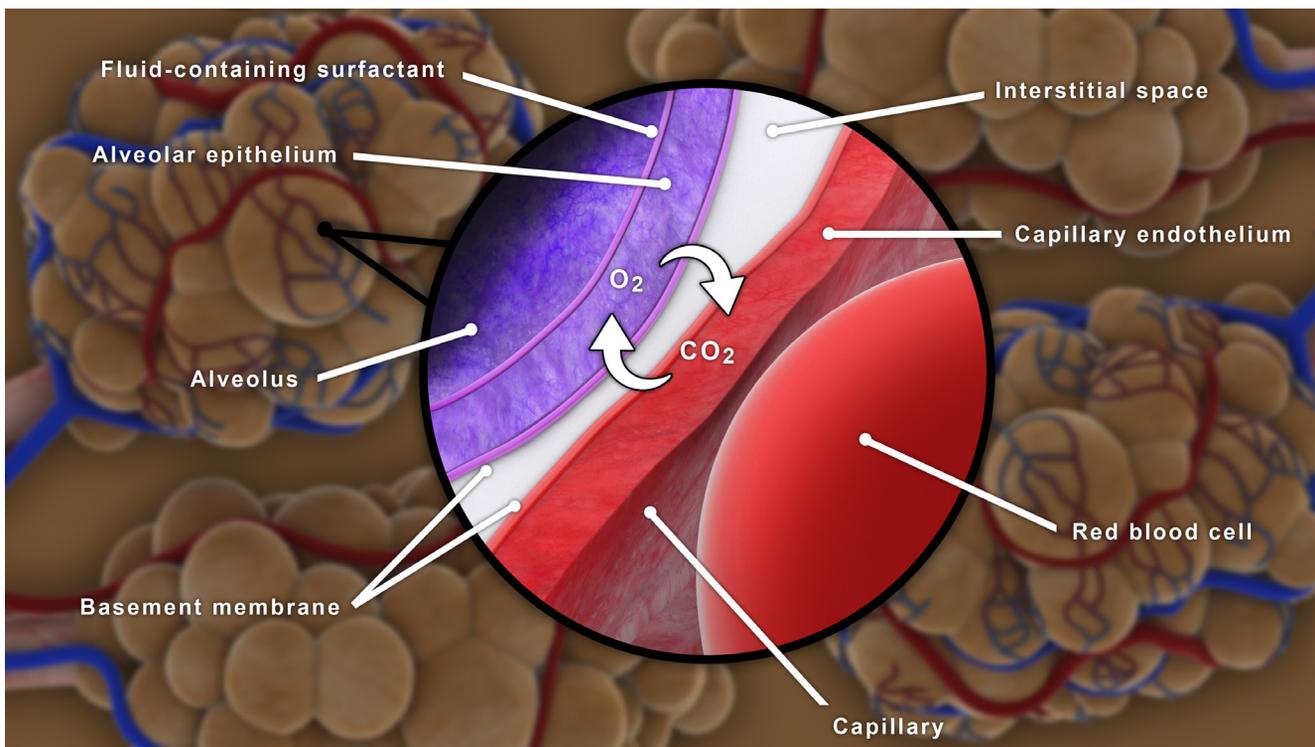


Figure 6-2 | Gas exchange occurs between the air in the alveolus and the red blood cells in the pulmonary capillary.

Expiration is a passive action that occurs when the diaphragm and external intercostal muscles relax. During active (forced) expiration, the internal intercostal muscles, the rectus abdominis and the external and internal oblique muscles are recruited as accessory muscles of ventilation.

The impulse to breathe is controlled by respiratory centers in the brain stem that regulate nerve impulses to the diaphragm and intercostal muscles. The respiratory centers receive input from chemoreceptors located throughout the body. These chemoreceptors detect changes in arterial oxygen and carbon dioxide content and in arterial pH, all of which affect the rate and depth of breathing. Other physiologic parameters that affect ventilation include core body temperature, muscle activity (e.g., during exercise) and activity of the sympathetic nervous system, which increases during times of stress.

## Gas Exchange

The **oxygen-hemoglobin dissociation curve**, shown in Figure 6-3, depicts the relationship between the partial pressure of oxygen ( $\text{PaO}_2$ ) and the arterial oxygen saturation ( $\text{SaO}_2$ ). As more oxygen molecules bind with the hemoglobin molecule, hemoglobin's affinity for oxygen increases until the hemoglobin molecule reaches its maximum oxygen-carrying capacity. Many factors can affect hemoglobin's affinity for binding with oxygen and the strength of the bond. These factors can cause the curve to shift to the right or to the left.

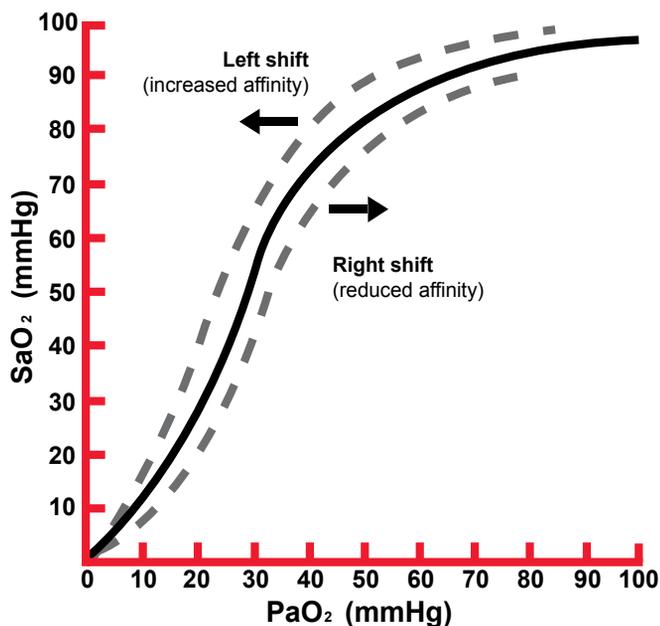


Figure 6-3 | The oxygen-hemoglobin dissociation curve

- **Right shift.** When there is acidosis, carbon dioxide is elevated or the body temperature is elevated, hemoglobin's affinity for oxygen is decreased. It is harder for oxygen to bind with the hemoglobin, but it is easier for the hemoglobin to offload the oxygen that it is carrying. This causes the curve to shift to the right. **Hypoventilation** leads to acidosis and a right shift of the oxygen-hemoglobin dissociation curve. This rightward shift helps to provide oxygen to the tissues during times of increased need, decreased delivery or both (such as during exercise or shock).
- **Left shift.** When there is alkalosis, carbon dioxide is decreased or the body temperature is decreased, hemoglobin's affinity for oxygen is increased. Oxygen binds to the hemoglobin easily, but offloading is difficult. For example, **hyperventilation** leads to alkalosis and a left shift of the oxygen-hemoglobin dissociation curve. As a result, it is more difficult for oxygen to be released at the cellular level. In the lungs under normal conditions, this is what leads to the higher affinity and binding of oxygen.

Gas exchange relies on pulmonary circulation. The main function of the pulmonary circulation is to bring deoxygenated blood to the lungs, perfuse the alveolar-capillary membrane and deliver oxygenated blood to the left side of the heart for systemic circulation (Figure 6-4).

Pulmonary circulation begins with the main pulmonary artery, which receives oxygen-depleted blood from the right ventricle. The main pulmonary artery divides into the right and left pulmonary arteries. Once in the lungs, the pulmonary arteries branch into progressively smaller arteries and arterioles to carry the oxygen-depleted blood to the capillary beds surrounding the alveoli. Because the concentration of oxygen is greater in the alveoli (as compared with the concentration of oxygen in the blood in the capillaries), oxygen diffuses across the alveolar-capillary membrane into the blood. Similarly, because the concentration of carbon dioxide is greater in the blood, carbon dioxide diffuses across the alveolar-capillary membrane into the alveoli, to be removed from the body on exhalation.

The oxygenated blood is carried through a network of pulmonary venules and veins until it reaches the right and left pulmonary veins, which empty into the left atrium. From the left atrium, the oxygenated blood is pumped into the left ventricle and out to the rest of the body.

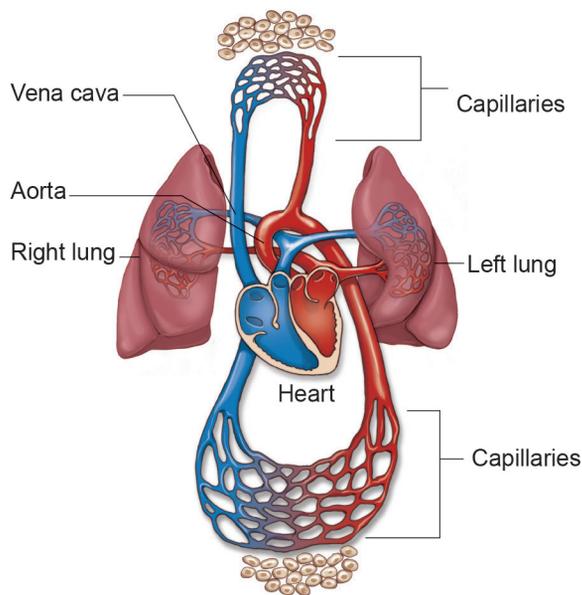


Figure 6-4 | The pulmonary circulation transports deoxygenated blood to the lungs and oxygenated blood back to the heart for distribution to the rest of the body.

## Pathophysiologic Mechanisms Contributing to Respiratory Emergencies

Respiratory emergencies arise due to problems with ventilation, diffusion (gas exchange) or perfusion. Problems with these processes may have many different sources. Remember, for effective respiration, the following must be present:

- Intact neuromuscular control of breathing
- A patent airway
- An intact alveolar-capillary membrane
- Oxygen-rich blood
- Functioning pulmonary and systemic circulatory systems
- Adequate blood pressure to promote diffusion and perfusion

### Inadequate Ventilation

Problems with ventilation occur in the presence of conditions that affect the body's ability to move air in and out of the lungs. Conditions that can lead to impaired ventilation include:

- **Airway obstruction.** Obstruction of the upper airway can result from a foreign body, fluids or secretions. Lower airway obstruction may result from pathologic processes involving the intrathoracic

airways (i.e., the distal trachea, bronchi and bronchioles). Lower airway obstruction may be due to inflammation, constriction or mucus plugging of the airways themselves. It may also be due to external compression, for example, by interstitial fluid in pulmonary edema. Obstruction at the level of the upper airway makes it difficult for air to get in, potentially impeding alveolar ventilation. Obstruction of the lower airway makes it difficult for air to get out, potentially leading to a greater volume of air, or "air trapping," in the lungs at the end of expiration. Air trapping ultimately increases the inspiratory work of breathing.

- **Neuromuscular conditions.** Conditions such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), myasthenia gravis, Guillain-Barré syndrome and muscular dystrophy impair neural signaling to the respiratory muscles, and over time, respiratory weakness and fatigue develop, impairing ventilation.
- **Central nervous system conditions.** Overdose of certain substances (such as opioids and alcohol) can suppress the respiratory drive, leading to impaired ventilation. Similarly, certain medications may suppress the respiratory drive.
- **Chronic lung disease.** In restrictive lung disease, such as pulmonary fibrosis and interstitial lung disease, **lung compliance** (i.e., the ability of the lung to stretch and expand) is reduced. In obstructive lung disease, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), obstruction of the airways leads to increased airway resistance. Both types of lung disease are associated with impaired ventilation and increased work of breathing.
- **Trauma.** Blunt or penetrating trauma to the chest wall and traumatic brain injury (TBI) can lead to impaired ventilation.

### Inadequate Diffusion and Perfusion

When diffusion is impaired, the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide between the alveoli and the pulmonary capillaries is affected. Diffusion defects may result from obstruction of the smaller airways in the lungs or from conditions that create an increased barrier to diffusion (e.g., interstitial lung disease). Diffusion defects may also occur when alveoli are filled with fluid or collapsed (e.g., due to pneumonia, pulmonary edema or COPD). **Ventilation-perfusion mismatch** refers to an imbalance between the air that reaches the alveoli (i.e., ventilation) and blood flow to the alveoli (i.e., perfusion) in a portion of the lung (Figure 6-5). Cardiac disorders, pulmonary embolism and tension pneumothorax can affect blood flow to the pulmonary capillary beds, resulting in "dead space ventilation" (i.e., ventilation without perfusion).

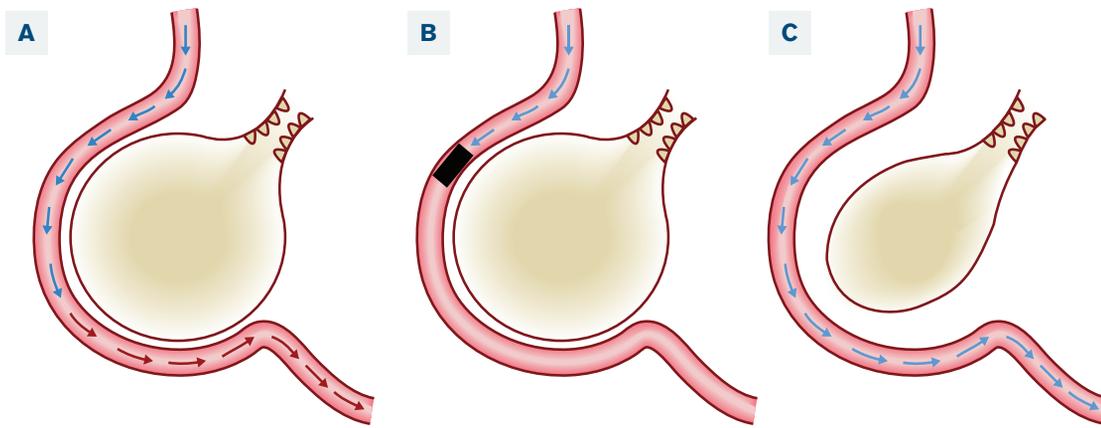


Figure 6-5 | Ventilation-perfusion mismatch refers to an imbalance between the air that reaches the alveoli and blood flow to the alveoli in a portion of the lung. (A) In the normal state, ventilation matches perfusion. (B) When blood flow to the alveolus is blocked, ventilation is adequate, but perfusion is not. (C) Shunting occurs when blood flow to the alveolus is adequate, but ventilation is not.

Disorders that result in pulmonary edema or atelectasis, such as pneumonia, can cause perfusion to exceed ventilation. The result is a physiologic shunt, in which poorly oxygenated blood coming back from these areas mixes with fully oxygenated blood returning from the rest of the lungs, ultimately resulting in the delivery of desaturated blood to the body.

using compensatory mechanisms to maintain adequate oxygenation and ventilation. The patient's work of breathing is increased, but physiologically, oxygenation and ventilation are adequate to meet metabolic demands. However, if the patient's respiratory distress is not relieved, these compensatory mechanisms will soon become inadequate, at which point the patient may develop respiratory failure.

## Respiratory Distress, Respiratory Failure and Respiratory Arrest

Respiratory compromise manifests along a continuum (Figure 6-6).

### Respiratory Distress

**Respiratory distress** represents the earliest stage on the continuum. A patient in respiratory distress is

Signs and symptoms of respiratory distress may include:

- Dyspnea.
- Speech dyspnea (i.e., the need to pause between words to take a breath), speaking in short one- or two-word sentences, or an inability to speak.
- Changes in breathing rate or depth.
- Tachycardia or bradycardia.
- Decreasing SaO<sub>2</sub> levels (however, SaO<sub>2</sub> levels may be unaffected in some patients).
- End-tidal carbon dioxide (ETCO<sub>2</sub>) levels that are initially low (less than 35 mmHg) but with increasing

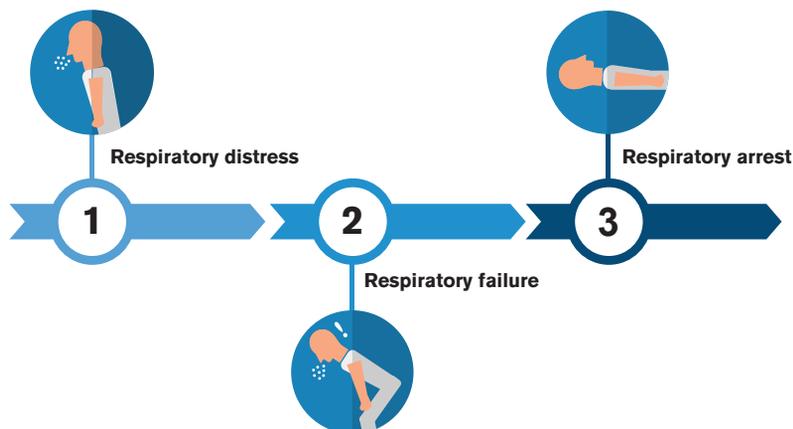


Figure 6-6 | Respiratory compromise occurs along a continuum.

distress move into the normal range (35 to 45 mmHg) and then become elevated (greater than 45 mmHg).

- Decreased, absent or abnormal breath sounds (e.g., wheezes, crackles, rhonchi).
- Use of accessory muscles to assist in breathing, evidenced by supraclavicular, suprasternal, intercostal or substernal retractions.
- Tripod positioning (leaning forward with the hands supported on the thighs or other surface).
- Diaphoresis (the skin is often cool and clammy).
- Irritability, restlessness or anxiety.
- Changes in level of consciousness.
- Cyanosis.

Early on in respiratory distress, the patient will tend to hyperventilate, which leads to hypocapnia and is reflected by a low  $\text{ETCO}_2$  value (i.e., less than 35 mmHg). As the patient's respiratory distress increases and the patient begins to tire, the  $\text{ETCO}_2$  value may return to the normal range (35 to 45 mmHg). But with the onset of respiratory failure, the  $\text{ETCO}_2$  level will increase to greater than 45 mmHg, indicating hypoventilation.



### Practice Note

Capnography can provide an objective assessment of the severity of the patient's respiratory distress. Arterial carbon dioxide ( $\text{PaCO}_2$ ) values can also be used and are more accurate than capnography, but require arterial sampling and do not provide a continuous output. Some respiratory conditions can make the absolute values or even capnography unreliable. For this reason, it is good clinical practice to correlate capnography with  $\text{PaCO}_2$  values. When and how often to obtain an arterial sample to correlate depends on clinical judgment, resources and the patient's condition. In conditions where the absolute value may not match the  $\text{PaCO}_2$  value, the trend in capnography values is usually accurate.

## Respiratory Failure

**Respiratory failure** occurs when the respiratory system can no longer meet metabolic demands. Respiratory failure usually represents a progression from respiratory distress, but patients may also initially present in respiratory failure. Respiratory failure must be addressed quickly to prevent respiratory arrest.

There are two types of respiratory failure: hypoxic

respiratory failure (characterized by a  $\text{PaO}_2$  less than 60 mmHg) and hypercapnic respiratory failure (characterized by a  $\text{PaCO}_2$  greater than 50 mmHg). Patients may also have a combined form. Hypoxic failure is most often associated with ventilation-perfusion mismatch, whereas hypercapnic failure is most often associated with decreased tidal volume or increased dead space. Signs of respiratory failure could include:

- Changes in level of consciousness.
- Cyanosis.
- $\text{SaO}_2$  values less than 90%.
- $\text{ETCO}_2$  values greater than 50 mmHg.
- Tachycardia.
- A decreased or irregular respiratory rate.



### Practice Note

An  $\text{SaO}_2$  of less than 90% ( $\text{PaO}_2$  of less than 50 mmHg) or a low  $\text{PaO}_2$  despite compensation and/or an  $\text{ETCO}_2$  value greater than 50 mmHg or a  $\text{PaCO}_2$  that is elevated and not reflective of ventilatory effort is indicative of respiratory failure.

## Respiratory Arrest

**Respiratory arrest** is complete cessation of the breathing effort. The body can tolerate respiratory arrest for only a very short time before the heart stops functioning as well, leading to cardiac arrest.

## Capnography in Respiratory Emergencies

**Quantitative capnometry** is the measurement of  $\text{ETCO}_2$  expressed as a value, and **quantitative capnography** is the measurement of  $\text{ETCO}_2$  expressed as a value and as a waveform. Capnography is useful for assessing the severity of the patient's clinical condition, discerning the underlying pathophysiology and evaluating the patient's response to interventions.

### Normal Waveform

The capnography waveform is a graphical representation of the movement of carbon dioxide through the respiratory system. The normal waveform has four phases (Figure 6-7).

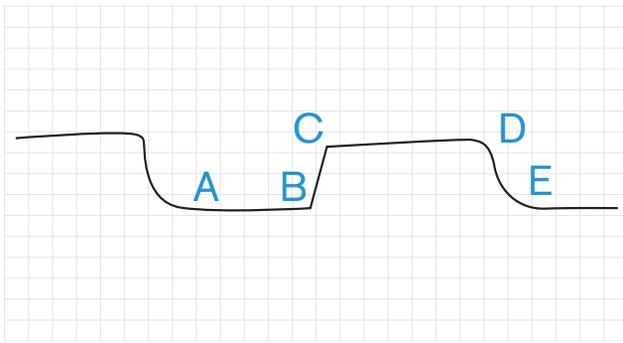


Figure 6-7 | Phases of the normal capnography waveform. **A–B:** respiratory baseline; **B–C:** respiratory upstroke; **C–D:** expiratory plateau; **D–E:** inspiratory downslope.

- **Phase I (A–B):** This is the **respiratory baseline**, representing the beginning of exhalation. During this phase, “dead space” air is exhaled from the body. This is the air in the airways from the bronchioles to the nasal cavity that does not contain carbon dioxide.
- **Phase II (B–C):** This is the **respiratory upstroke**, representing air from the alveoli that contains carbon dioxide being exhaled from the body. For most patients, the respiratory upstroke should be nearly vertical.
- **Phase III (C–D):** This is the **expiratory plateau**. During this phase, the last of the carbon dioxide–laden air from the most distal alveoli is exhaled from the body. The  $\text{ETCO}_2$  value is measured at the end of exhalation (point D), which represents the peak level.
- **Phase IV (D–E):** This is the **inspiratory downslope**. During this phase, inhalation occurs and the carbon dioxide is rapidly purged from the airways and alveoli.

A normal capnogram is square with a flat respiratory baseline, a flat expiratory plateau and an  $\text{ETCO}_2$  value between 35 and 45 mmHg. The square waveform indicates that carbon dioxide flow is not obstructed. The flat respiratory baseline means that the patient is not rebreathing carbon dioxide. The flat expiratory plateau means that the patient is exhaling carbon dioxide to the peak level.

### Practice Note

In inflammatory conditions, the waveform may still be square, despite narrowing of the airway, because the alveoli still empty at the same rate. However, in conditions that cause bronchospasm, alveolar emptying is uneven, producing abnormal respiratory upstroke and expiratory plateau morphology.

## Waveform Interpretation

To evaluate a capnography waveform, take a five-step approach:

1. **Look at the waveform.** Is there a waveform? Even an abnormal waveform is an indication that carbon dioxide is present.
2. **Look at the respiratory baseline.** Is the respiratory baseline flat and consistent from breath to breath? A respiratory baseline that slopes upward and increases with each breath suggests that the patient is rebreathing carbon dioxide (Figure 6-8A).
3. **Look at the respiratory upstroke.** Is the respiratory upstroke nearly vertical? A sloping, prolonged respiratory upstroke that is not vertical represents uneven alveolar emptying as a result of bronchospasm (see Figure 6-8B).
4. **Look at the expiratory plateau.** Is the expiratory plateau flat? Loss of plateau (see Figure 6-8C) is produced by uneven alveolar emptying secondary to severe bronchospasm that leads to air trapping. An

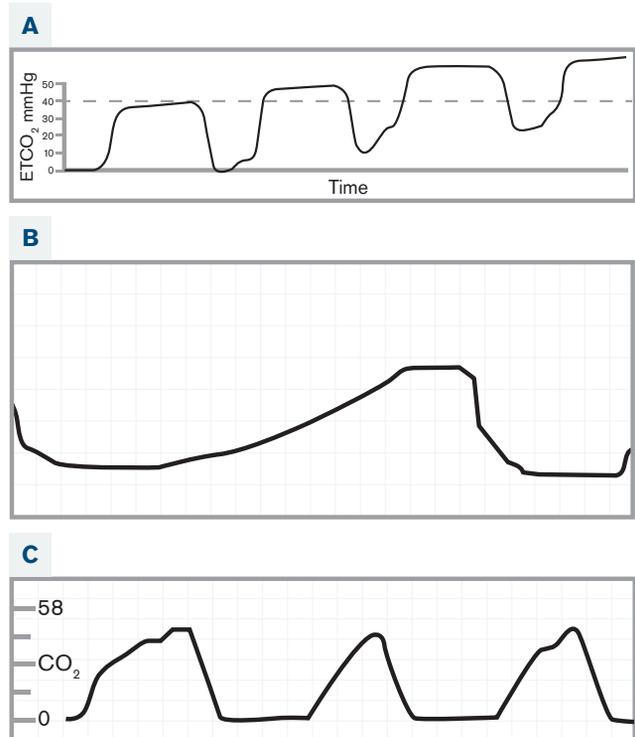


Figure 6-8 | Abnormal capnography waveform morphology. (A) Upward sloping respiratory baselines indicate that the patient is rebreathing carbon dioxide. (B) A sloping, prolonged respiratory upstroke indicates uneven alveolar emptying. (C) A loss of expiratory plateau indicates severe bronchospasm and air trapping.

absent plateau suggests **dynamic hyperinflation**, also called auto-positive end-expiratory pressure (auto-PEEP). Auto-PEEP occurs when exhalation time is insufficient and the lungs do not completely empty before the next breath, preventing the respiratory system from returning to its resting end-expiratory equilibrium volume between breath cycles. This is a serious condition because the patient's  $\text{ETCO}_2$  level is much higher than the value recorded by capnography.

- 5. Read the  $\text{ETCO}_2$  value.** Finally, evaluate the  $\text{ETCO}_2$  measurement. An  $\text{ETCO}_2$  measurement greater than 45 mmHg suggests hypercapnia, which may be caused by respiratory failure. An  $\text{ETCO}_2$  measurement less than 35 mmHg suggests hypocapnia, which may be caused by hyperventilation or hypoperfusion.



### Practice Note

To interpret a waveform accurately, print it out in real time on paper. The waveform displayed on the monitor is compressed and cannot be used for diagnostic purposes, other than for noting the presence of a square waveform or a flat line (apnea).

## Patient Assessment

Data gathered during the rapid, primary and secondary assessments can help you to determine where the patient is on the continuum of respiratory compromise and may offer clues as to the underlying cause.

### Rapid Assessment

Signs of respiratory compromise that you may observe during the rapid assessment include retractions and the use of accessory muscles to breathe; tripod positioning; an inability to speak in complete sentences (or at all); pale, ashen or cyanotic skin; diaphoresis; and restlessness, agitation or an altered level of consciousness.

A patient in respiratory arrest or failure has a pulse but is not breathing (arrest) or has ineffective ventilation (failure).

### Primary Assessment

Conduct a primary assessment following the ABCDE approach and provide initial interventions as needed:

- Ensure a patent airway.
- Assist with ventilation as necessary. Patients who cannot ventilate adequately despite an open airway or who have insufficient respiratory effort require assisted ventilation, which is initially provided using a bag-valve-mask (BVM) resuscitator.
- Establish pulse oximetry and provide the minimal level of supplemental oxygen needed to maintain an oxygen saturation of 94% to 99%.
- Establish capnography and adjust ventilations as needed to maintain carbon dioxide levels in physiologic range ( $\text{PaCO}_2$  between 35 and 45 mmHg or monitored using  $\text{ETCO}_2$ ) unless another target is clinically indicated.
- Establish vascular access.



### Practice Note

Some patients with end-stage COPD may have chronically elevated arterial carbon dioxide levels and chronically low arterial oxygen levels. In these patients, the stimulus to breathe becomes dependent on the peripheral chemoreceptors, which respond to arterial oxygen levels rather than arterial carbon dioxide levels. Provide the minimal level of supplemental oxygen needed to maintain an oxygen saturation of 94% and carefully monitor the patient for inadequate ventilation, which may necessitate providing a lower level of supplemental oxygen.

## Secondary Assessment

The secondary assessment will often help to further discern the underlying cause of the respiratory compromise and evaluate the severity of the patient's condition. Although there are many potential differential diagnoses for respiratory compromise, the acute onset of respiratory distress is frequently pulmonary or cardiac in origin (Box 6-1).

### History

Conduct a focused history. If the patient is having difficulty speaking or has an altered level of consciousness, you may need to obtain the history from other healthcare providers, family members or bystanders. Ask about the patient's medical history and whether they have experienced similar episodes in the past. Information about the onset of the respiratory distress (was it acute, or did it develop over time?), associated signs and symptoms (such as chest pain, nausea or fever) and medications can also provide valuable insight into the underlying cause.

#### Pulmonary

- Pulmonary embolism
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) exacerbation
- Asthma exacerbation
- Pneumonia
- Pneumothorax
- Noncardiogenic pulmonary edema/acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)

#### Cardiac

- Cardiogenic pulmonary edema/congestive heart failure (CHF)
- Acute coronary syndromes (ACS)
- Cardiac tamponade
- Acute valvular insufficiency

## Physical Examination

Perform a physical examination of the patient. For patients with respiratory compromise, a detailed pulmonary examination is essential.

## Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests that may be ordered in the initial evaluation of a patient with respiratory compromise include blood gases (arterial or venous); serum cardiac markers; a basic metabolic panel; a toxicology screen; chest radiography, chest computed tomography (CT), or both; a 12-lead ECG; and bedside echocardiography or ultrasonography.

## Approach to the Patient

For a patient with respiratory compromise, interventions depend on the underlying cause. Common interventions include supplemental oxygen, medications specific to the underlying cause (e.g., bronchodilators, diuretics) and assisted ventilation (BVM-assisted ventilation, noninvasive ventilation or invasive ventilation).

A continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) device “splints” the alveoli open and allows for better gas exchange, which improves oxygenation and may reduce the work of breathing. A bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP) device provides two levels of pressure—one for the inspiratory positive airway pressure (IPAP) and one for the expiratory positive airway pressure (EPAP). The same device is also often able to provide CPAP, which

is a single level of positive pressure during all phases of breathing. BiPAP may be preferred for patients with ventilatory failure in addition to oxygenation issues because this method of noninvasive ventilation provides support to ventilation during inspiration and support of alveoli during other phases of respiration.

After any intervention, reassess the patient to determine response and adjust the treatment plan as necessary. Monitor the patient for signs of worsening respiratory function, such as increased work of breathing, an increase or decrease in respiratory rate, hypoxemia or mental status changes. Pulse oximetry and capnography provide ongoing data about the patient’s respiratory function and should be monitored closely.

## Respiratory Arrest

### Assess and Recognize

A patient in respiratory arrest is not breathing but has a pulse.

### Care

Ensure a patent airway and deliver 1 ventilation every 6 seconds. Provide ventilations by BVM initially; provide mechanical ventilation as indicated. Provide high-flow supplemental oxygen, titrating to achieve and maintain an oxygen saturation of 94% to 99%, a PaO<sub>2</sub> in the physiologic range or both. Adjust ventilations as needed to keep carbon dioxide levels in physiologic range (PaCO<sub>2</sub> between 35 to 45 mmHg or monitored using ETCO<sub>2</sub>). While supporting ventilation, consider and address potential underlying causes.

Perform a primary assessment and provide emergent/initial interventions, if not already done. Continue to check breathing and pulse every 2 minutes; if the pulse becomes absent, begin CPR immediately. Position the patient as appropriate for their clinical condition, and perform a secondary assessment as the patient’s condition allows. Reassess the patient, recognize issues and provide care as needed.

## Opioid Overdose

Opioid overdose suppresses the central respiratory drive and can quickly induce respiratory arrest or cardiac arrest. The *Adult Suspected or Known Opioid Toxicity Code Card* summarizes the approach to a patient with known or suspected opioid toxicity.

## Assess and Recognize

Respiratory depression is a hallmark feature of opioid toxicity, especially when accompanied by altered mental status (including unconsciousness) and miosis.

## Care

For patients with respiratory arrest or failure as a result of suspected or known opioid toxicity, ensure an adequate airway and support oxygenation and ventilation as needed. Administer naloxone as soon as it is available. Naloxone may be administered via the intravenous (IV), intraosseous (IO), intramuscular (IM), intranasal (IN) or subcutaneous (SC) route. For intravenous administration, the dose is 0.4 mg IV. For administration via an auto-injector or nasal delivery device (such as those used in public access and community programs), the dose is 0.4 mg IM or 2 mg IN. All naloxone dosing may be repeated after 2 to 3 minutes. Reassess responsiveness and breathing and administer additional doses of naloxone as needed. If not already done, perform a primary assessment, position the patient appropriately for their clinical condition, and perform a secondary assessment as the patient's condition allows.

Continue to reassess the patient, recognize issues and provide care. Monitor the patient for at least 4 to 6

hours after the last dose of naloxone is given. Longer observation times may be indicated if the cause of the overdose was an extended-release or long-acting opioid. Because respiratory depression may recur with an extended-release or long-acting opioid, consider admission to the critical care unit and initiation of a continuous naloxone infusion at two-thirds of the effective dose per hour, titrated to patient response.

When opioid toxicity is the suspected or known cause of cardiac arrest, naloxone should be administered as soon as possible without disrupting or delaying CPR and AED use. For a patient in cardiac arrest, high-quality CPR and AED use are prioritized over the administration of naloxone.

If the patient is responsive but has altered mental status, or is not responsive but is breathing normally and has a pulse, consider naloxone. If not already done, perform a primary assessment, position the patient as appropriate for their clinical condition, and perform a secondary assessment as the patient's condition allows. Continuously reassess the patient, recognize issues, and provide care. If naloxone was given, monitor the patient for 4 to 6 hours after the last dose.

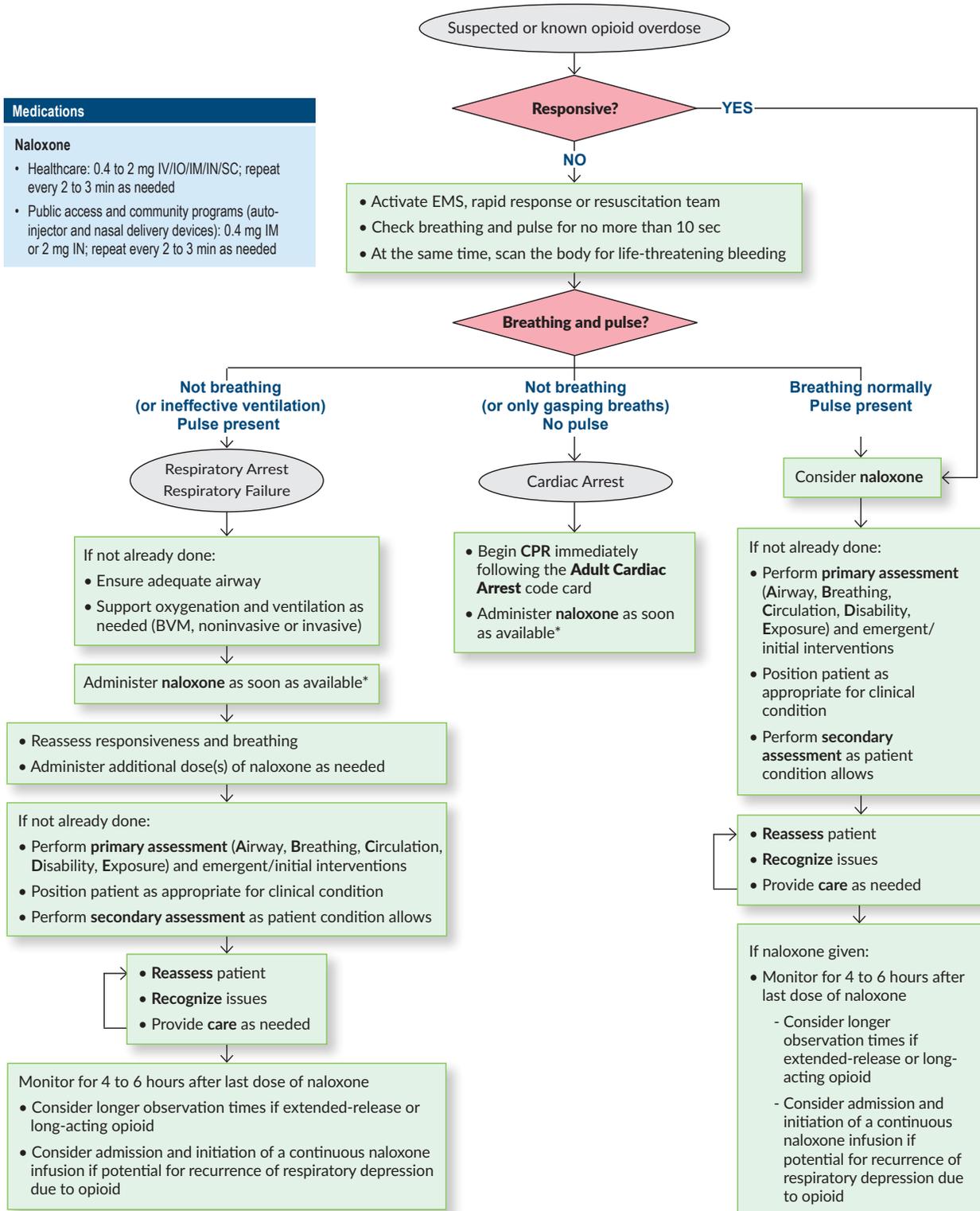
# ADULT SUSPECTED OR KNOWN OPIOID TOXICITY

ALS - 2020 VERSION

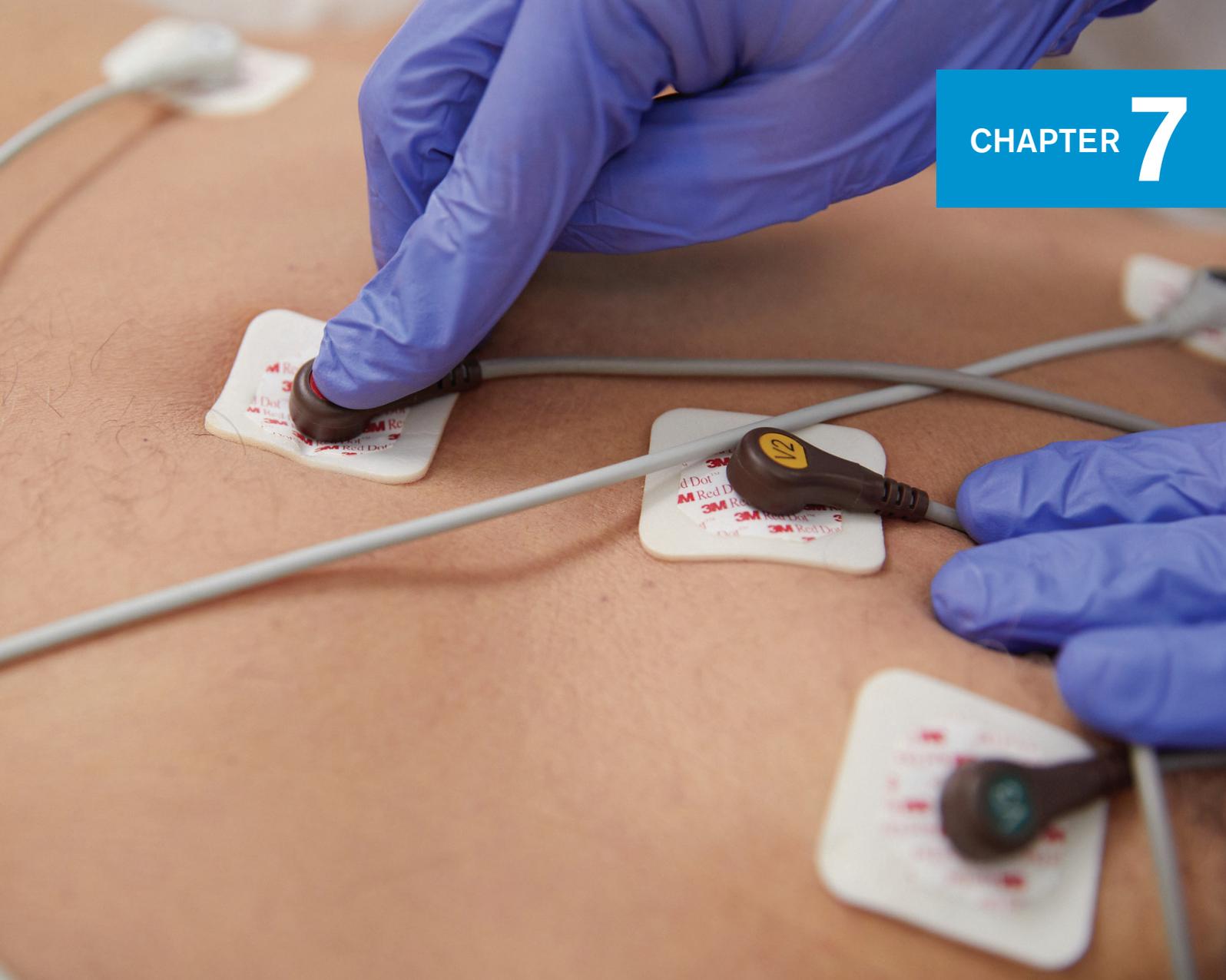
**Medications**

**Naloxone**

- Healthcare: 0.4 to 2 mg IV/IO/IM/IN/SC; repeat every 2 to 3 min as needed
- Public access and community programs (auto-injector and nasal delivery devices): 0.4 mg IM or 2 mg IN; repeat every 2 to 3 min as needed



\*Prioritize care for respiratory arrest/respiratory failure or cardiac arrest over the administration of naloxone.



# Arrhythmias

## Introduction

A cardiac arrhythmia is a deviation from the normal heart rate, electrical activity pattern or rhythm that varies from normal sinus rhythm. Although not every arrhythmia is dangerous to the patient, many can be serious, and some require immediate treatment to prevent sudden death. For this reason, ALS providers must be able to identify abnormal rhythms accurately and interpret them within the overall clinical context.

## Electrical Conduction

### Cardiac Conduction System

The cardiac conduction system is a group of specialized myocardial cells that generate and transmit the electrical signals that cause the heart muscle to contract. A well-functioning conduction system is essential for ensuring the rhythmic, coordinated contraction of the heart that is necessary to maintain cardiac output.

The cardiac conduction system consists of the sinoatrial (SA) node, the atrioventricular (AV) node, the bundle of His, the left and right bundle branches and the Purkinje fibers (Figure 7-1). Normally, the SA node, located in the upper right atrium, generates the electrical impulses that initiate the rhythm and rate of the heart. The impulse generated by the SA node travels via specialized pathways across the walls of the atria, causing the atria to contract, until it reaches the AV node at the base of the right atrium. The AV node, which briefly slows the transmission of the impulse, plays an important role in coordinating and maintaining appropriate AV conduction. From the AV node, the impulse travels through the bundle of His, which descends the membranous aspect of the interventricular septum before dividing into the right and left bundle branches. The impulse continues down the bundle branches and through the Purkinje fibers, causing the ventricles to contract.

The SA node is the primary pacemaker of the heart. However, in the event of SA node dysfunction or failure, the AV node can function as a backup pacemaker. Similarly, the cells of the **atrioventricular (AV) junction** (the zone of tissue surrounding the AV node), the bundle branches and the ventricles can generate impulses to maintain some level of contraction and cardiac output.

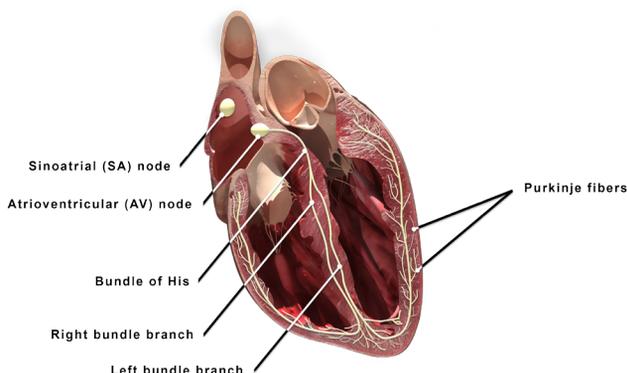


Figure 7-1 | The cardiac conduction system

## Features of an ECG Tracing

An ECG tracing is a graphical representation of the electrical impulse as it travels through the conduction system, causing depolarization and then repolarization of the myocardium. The waveforms and intervals seen on an ECG tracing correspond to events in the cardiac cycle (Figure 7-2):

- **P wave.** The P wave represents depolarization of the atrial myocardial cells.
- **QRS complex.** The QRS complex represents depolarization of the ventricular myocardial cells. The normal duration of the QRS complex is less than 120 milliseconds (0.12 second).
- **T wave.** The T wave represents repolarization of the ventricular myocardial cells. (Atrial repolarization occurs during ventricular depolarization and is not seen on the ECG; it is overshadowed by the depolarization of the larger ventricles.)
- **PR interval.** The PR interval represents the time from the beginning of atrial depolarization to the beginning of ventricular depolarization. It is measured from the beginning of the P wave to the beginning of the QRS complex. The normal duration of the PR interval is 120 to 200 milliseconds (0.12 to 0.2 second).
- **QT interval.** The QT interval is measured from the beginning of the QRS complex to the end of the T wave. This encompasses the time from the beginning of ventricular depolarization to the end of ventricular repolarization. Because the QT interval varies normally with the heart rate, the **corrected QT interval (QTc)** is used to give a value that is theoretically independent of rate. The QTc adjusts for heart rate differences by dividing the QT interval by the square root of the RR interval (i.e., one cardiac cycle). In general, a QTc greater than 460 milliseconds (0.46 second) is considered to be prolonged.



### Practice Note

If the heart rate is faster than 120 bpm or slower than 50 bpm, the formula for calculating the QTc is not considered valid and should not be used.

- **ST segment.** The ST segment represents the time between the end of ventricular depolarization and the beginning of ventricular repolarization. It is measured from the end of the QRS complex to the beginning of the T wave.
- **J point.** The J point is the point where the QRS complex ends and the ST segment begins.

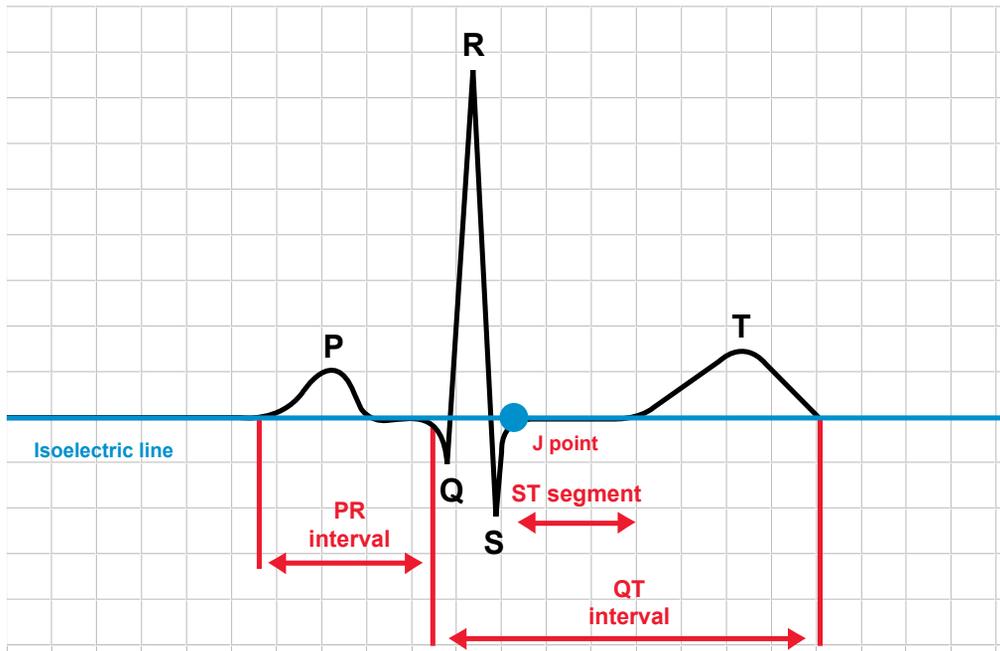


Figure 7-2 | Features of an ECG tracing

## Approach to Evaluating an ECG Tracing

Taking a methodical approach to evaluating the rhythm strip ensures that you gather relevant details that can help you to identify the rhythm accurately.

- 1. Regularity.** Look at the rhythm to see whether it is regular. Is the amount of time between each P wave the same? What about the amount of time between each QRS complex (i.e., the RR interval)?
- 2. Rate.** To estimate the atrial rate, count the number of P waves over a 6-second period and multiply by 10. To estimate the ventricular rate, do the same with the QRS complexes. Alternatively, if the rhythm is regular, divide 300 by the number of large squares between two P waves (to get the atrial rate) and between two R waves (to get the ventricular rate). If the heart rate is very fast, divide 1500 by the number of small squares between two P waves (to get the atrial rate) and between two R waves (to get the ventricular rate). Are the atrial and ventricular rates the same or different? Are they within normal limits?
- 3. P waves.** Look at the P wave morphology. Is it consistent? Is there one—and only one—P wave associated with each QRS complex? Note that in lead II, the P waves are usually upright but in lead  $V_1$ , the P waves may be inverted or biphasic.

- 4. QRS complex.** Measure the QRS complex. Is it within the normal range? (QRS complexes that exceed 0.12 second in duration are abnormal.) Do all the QRS complexes have the same morphology?
- 5. PR interval.** Measure the PR interval. Is it within the normal range (0.12 to 0.2 second)? Is it consistent throughout the tracing? If it varies, is the variation predictable?
- 6. Clinical significance.** Determine the rhythm and its clinical significance. Is the patient showing signs or symptoms? Is the rhythm potentially life-threatening?

## Normal Sinus Rhythm

In normal sinus rhythm (Figure 7-3):

- The rhythm is regular (but may vary slightly during respirations).
- The rate ranges between 60 and 100 bpm.
- The P waves are uniform in shape, indicating that the SA node is the only pacemaker driving atrial depolarization.
- Each P wave is linked in a 1:1 fashion to each QRS complex (i.e., atrial depolarization is always linked to ventricular depolarization).



**Regularity:** regular  
**Rate:** 60–100 bpm  
**P wave:** upright and uniform; one for every QRS complex  
**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second  
**PR interval:** 0.12–0.20 second

Figure 7-3 | Sinus rhythm

## Recognizing Bradyarrhythmias

Bradyarrhythmias described in this chapter include sinus bradycardia, first-degree AV block, second-degree AV block (types I and II) and third-degree (complete) AV block.



### Practice Note

Bradycardia is defined as a heart rate less than 60 bpm. In most cases, patients present with symptoms when the heart rate is less than 50 bpm.

## Sinus Bradycardia

Sinus bradycardia is identical to normal sinus rhythm, except the rate is less than 60 bpm. Cardiac activation starts at the SA node but is slower than normal. Sinus bradycardia may be a normal finding in some patients, particularly healthy young adults and trained athletes. In other patients, however, sinus bradycardia is a pathologic finding.

### Causes

Causes of sinus bradycardia include:

- Vagal stimulation.
- Myocardial infarction.
- Hypoxia.
- Medications (e.g.,  $\beta$ -blockers, calcium channel blockers, digoxin).
- Coronary artery disease.
- Hypothyroidism.
- Iatrogenic illness.
- Inflammatory conditions.

## Signs and Symptoms

Sinus bradycardia may not cause signs or symptoms. However, when sinus bradycardia significantly affects cardiac output, signs and symptoms may include:

- Dizziness or light-headedness.
- Syncope.
- Fatigue.
- Shortness of breath.
- Confusion or memory problems.

## ECG Findings

On ECG, sinus bradycardia appears the same as sinus rhythm, except the heart rate is less than 60 bpm (Figure 7-4).



**Regularity:** regular  
**Rate:** < 60 bpm  
**P wave:** upright and uniform; one for every QRS complex  
**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second  
**PR interval:** 0.12–0.20 second

Figure 7-4 | Sinus bradycardia

## Atrioventricular Block

AV block is partial or complete interruption of impulse transmission from the atria to the ventricles. The block may occur at the AV node, the bundle of His, the bundle branches or the Purkinje fibers. Common causes of AV block include fibrosis and scarring of the conduction system and myocardial infarction. Other causes include medications (such as  $\beta$ -blockers, calcium channel blockers, digoxin and amiodarone), electrolyte abnormalities, myocardial ischemia, infectious or inflammatory disorders and congenital heart conditions. Depending on the cause, AV block can be transient or persistent. AV blocks are classified as first, second or third degree. Figure 7-5 summarizes how to differentiate AV blocks according to ECG findings.

### First-Degree Atrioventricular Block

First-degree AV block is characterized by a prolonged delay in conduction at the AV node or bundle of His. The impulse is conducted normally from the sinus node through the atria, but upon reaching the AV node, it is delayed for

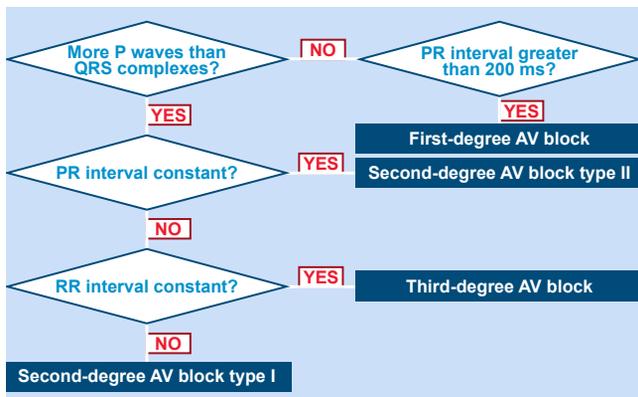


Figure 7-5 | Approach to differentiating atrioventricular (AV) blocks according to ECG findings

longer than the usual 200 milliseconds (0.2 second). In first-degree AV block, although the impulses are delayed, each atrial impulse is eventually conducted through the AV node to cause ventricular depolarization.

### Causes

First-degree AV block may be a normal finding in athletes and young patients with high vagal tone. It can also be an early sign of degenerative disease of the conduction system or a transient manifestation of myocarditis or drug toxicity.

### Signs and Symptoms

First-degree AV block rarely produces symptoms.

### ECG Findings

First-degree AV block (Figure 7-6) is characterized by normal P waves that are each followed by QRS complexes, but because the impulse is delayed at the AV node or bundle of His, the PR interval is longer than normal (i.e., it exceeds 0.2 second). QRS complexes of normal duration suggest that the delay is occurring at the level of the AV node, whereas wide QRS complexes suggest that the delay is **infranodal** (distal to the node).



**Regularity:** regular  
**Rate:** variable; can occur with normal rate, bradycardia or tachycardia  
**P wave:** upright and uniform; one for every QRS complex  
**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second  
**PR interval:** > 0.20 second

Figure 7-6 | First-degree atrioventricular (AV) block

## Second-Degree Atrioventricular Block Type I

In second-degree AV block type I (also called Mobitz type I or Wenckebach block), impulses are delayed and some are not conducted through to the ventricles. After three or four successive impulse delays, the next impulse is blocked. After the blocked impulse, the AV node resets, and the pattern repeats. Second-degree AV block type I usually occurs at the AV node but may be infranodal.

### Causes

Because the block usually occurs above the bundle of His, conditions or medications that affect the AV node (such as myocarditis, electrolyte abnormalities, inferior wall myocardial infarction or medications such as digoxin) can cause second-degree AV block type I. This type of arrhythmia can also be physiologic.

### Signs and Symptoms

Second-degree AV block type I rarely produces symptoms. Some patients may have signs and symptoms similar to sinus bradycardia.

### ECG Findings

Because some impulses are not conducted through to the ventricles, the ratio of P waves to QRS complexes is greater than 1:1 (Figure 7-7). Because each impulse is delayed a little more than the last until eventually one impulse is completely blocked, the ECG shows progressive lengthening of the PR interval with each beat, then a P wave that is not followed by a QRS complex (a “dropped beat”). In most cases, the RR interval decreases before each dropped beat. After the dropped beat, impulse conduction through the AV node resumes and the sequence repeats.



**Regularity:** irregular in a pattern  
**Rate:** variable; usually < 100 bpm  
**P wave:** upright and uniform; more P waves than QRS complexes  
**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second  
**PR interval:** becomes progressively longer until a P wave is not conducted, then cycle repeats

Figure 7-7 | Second-degree atrioventricular (AV) block type I

## Second-Degree Atrioventricular Block Type II

In second-degree AV block type II (Mobitz type II), the block occurs below the AV node, in the bundle of His. As with second-degree AV block type I, some atrial impulses are conducted through to the ventricles, and others are not. However, there are no progressive delays. The blocked impulses may be chaotic or occur in a pattern (e.g., 2:1, 3:1 or 4:1). In high-grade second-degree AV block type II, the ratio is greater than 2:1 (i.e., 3:1, 4:1, or variable).

### Causes

Second-degree AV block type II is always pathologic. It is usually caused by fibrotic disease of the conduction system or anterior wall myocardial infarction.

### Signs and Symptoms

Patients may present with light-headedness or syncope, or they may be asymptomatic. The clinical presentation varies, depending on the ratio of conducted to blocked impulses.

### ECG Findings

Second-degree AV block type II is characterized by a constant PR interval (Figure 7-8). Because impulses are intermittently blocked, there are more P waves than QRS complexes.



**Regularity:** regular (2:1), unless conduction ratio varies  
**Rate:** usually < 100 bpm, tendency for bradycardia  
**P wave:** upright and uniform; more P waves than QRS complexes (2:1, 3:1, 4:1 or variable)  
**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second  
**PR interval:** < 0.20 second or prolonged; constant for every QRS complex

Figure 7-8 | Second-degree atrioventricular (AV) block type II

## Third-Degree Atrioventricular Block

In third-degree (complete) AV block, no impulses are conducted through to the ventricles. The block can occur at the level of the AV node but is usually infranodal. Pacemaker cells in the AV junction, bundle of His or the ventricles stimulate the ventricles to

contract, usually at a rate of 30 to 45 bpm. This means that the atria and ventricles are being driven by independent pacemakers and are contracting at their own intrinsic rates, a situation known as **atrioventricular (AV) dissociation**.

### Causes

Degenerative disease of the conduction system is the leading cause of third-degree AV block. This arrhythmia may also result from damage caused by myocardial infarction, Lyme disease or antiarrhythmic medications.

### Signs and Symptoms

If ventricular contraction is stimulated by pacemaker cells above the bifurcation of the bundle of His, the ventricular rate is relatively fast (40 to 60 bpm) and reliable, and symptoms may be mild (such as fatigue, orthostatic hypotension and effort intolerance). However, if ventricular contraction is stimulated by pacemaker cells in the ventricles, the ventricular rate will be slower (20 to 40 bpm) and less reliable, and symptoms of decreased cardiac output may be more severe.

### ECG Findings

In third-degree AV block, there is no electrical communication between the atria and ventricles, so there is no relationship between P waves and QRS complexes (Figure 7-9). The RR interval is usually constant. The PP interval is constant or slightly irregular. If pacemaker cells in the AV junction stimulate ventricular contraction, the QRS complexes will be narrow (less than 0.12 second in duration). Impulses that originate in the ventricles produce wide QRS complexes.



**Regularity:** usually regular RR interval, regular PP interval  
**Rate:** varies depending on escape focus; junctional (40–60 bpm) and ventricular (< 40 bpm)  
**P wave:** upright and uniform, more P waves than QRS complexes  
**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second if junctional escape, ≥ 0.12 second if ventricular escape  
**PR interval:** total dissociation from QRS complexes

Figure 7-9 | Third-degree atrioventricular (AV) block

## Recognizing Tachyarrhythmias

Tachyarrhythmias can be categorized as narrow complex or wide complex.

- Narrow-complex tachyarrhythmias include sinus tachycardia, atrial flutter, supraventricular tachycardia (SVT) and atrial fibrillation. These arrhythmias usually originate above the ventricles in the atria or AV node and run normally through the bundle branches, producing a normal QRS complex.
- Wide-complex tachyarrhythmias originate in the ventricles and include monomorphic and polymorphic ventricular tachycardia, torsades de pointes (a form of polymorphic ventricular tachycardia) and ventricular fibrillation. Supraventricular tachycardia with aberrant conduction can also produce a wide-complex tachyarrhythmia.

### Sinus Tachycardia

Sinus tachycardia, the most common tachyarrhythmia, is identical to normal sinus rhythm, except the rate is between 100 and 150 bpm (Figure 7-10). Sinus tachycardia is a normal physiologic response when the body is under stress (such as that caused by exercise, illness or pain). It may also be seen in patients with heart failure, lung disease, shock or hyperthyroidism.



**Regularity:** regular  
**Rate:** 100–150 bpm  
**P wave:** upright and uniform; one for every QRS complex  
**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second, regular  
**PR interval:** 0.12–0.20 second

Figure 7-10 | Sinus tachycardia

### Atrial Flutter

Atrial flutter is caused by an ectopic focus in the atria that causes the atria to contract at a rate of 250 to 350 bpm. The underlying mechanism of atrial flutter is most often a reentrant circuit that encircles the tricuspid valve annulus.

### Causes

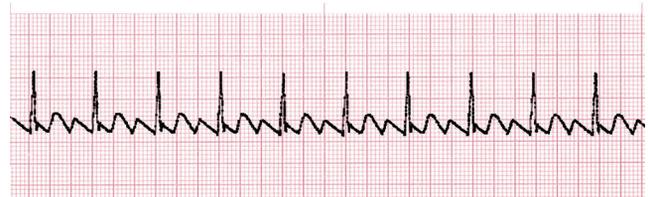
Atrial flutter is often seen in patients with heart disease (such as heart failure, rheumatic heart disease or coronary artery disease) or as a postoperative complication.

### Signs and Symptoms

Patients may be asymptomatic or present with shortness of breath, palpitations, effort intolerance, chest constriction, weakness or syncope.

### ECG Findings

In atrial flutter, atrial contraction occurs at such a rapid rate that discrete P waves separated by a flat baseline cannot be seen (Figure 7-11). Instead, the baseline continually rises and falls, producing the “flutter” waves. In leads II and III, the flutter waves may be quite prominent, creating a “sawtooth” pattern. Because of the volume of atrial impulses, the AV node allows only some of the impulses to pass through to the ventricles. In atrial flutter, a 2:1 ratio is the most common (i.e., for every two flutter waves, only one impulse passes through the AV node to generate a QRS complex). Ratios of 3:1 and 4:1 are also frequently seen.



**Regularity:** usually regular (could be irregular with variable conduction)

**Rate:** varies with conduction; < 100 bpm is controlled; > 100 bpm is uncontrolled (rapid ventricular response); usually has ventricular rates of 75 bpm (4:1), 100 bpm (3:1) or 150 bpm (2:1), depending on conduction ratio

**P wave:** none; flutter (F) waves; characteristic “sawtooth” baseline

**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second

**PR interval:** not discernible

Figure 7-11 | Atrial flutter

### Supraventricular Tachycardia

Supraventricular tachycardia (SVT) is an arrhythmia originating above the ventricles. In general, the rate is greater than 150 bpm, which helps to differentiate SVT from sinus tachycardia. SVT can be classified as AV

nodal reentrant tachycardia (AVNRT), AV-reciprocating tachycardia (AVRT) and atrial tachycardia.

## Causes

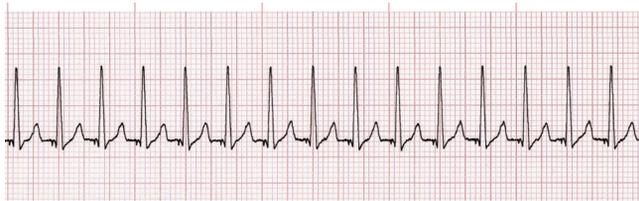
SVT is seen in patients with low potassium and magnesium levels, a family history of tachycardia, structural abnormalities of the heart, adverse reactions from certain pharmacologic agents (e.g., antihistamines, theophylline, cough and cold preparations, appetite suppressants), certain medical conditions (e.g., cardiovascular disease, long-term respiratory disease, diabetes, anemia, cancer) and illicit drug use.

## Signs and Symptoms

Patients may present without symptoms or with dizziness or light-headedness, dyspnea, palpitations (including pulsations in the neck area), diaphoresis, ischemic chest pain, hypotension, fatigue, vision changes and syncope.

## ECG Findings

In SVT, the P waves may be absent or abnormal. There is minimal to no beat-to-beat variability and the heart rate is usually greater than or equal to 150 bpm (Figure 7-12).



**Regularity:** regular; minimal beat-to-beat variability  
**Rate:** typically > 150 bpm  
**P wave:** absent or not clearly identifiable  
**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second  
**PR interval:** if P waves are visible, PR interval may be shortened or lengthened depending on mechanism

Figure 7-12 | Supraventricular tachycardia

## Atrial Fibrillation

Atrial fibrillation is caused by multiple ectopic foci in the atria that cause the atria to contract at a rate of 350 to 600 bpm. Rarely, the atrial rate may be as high as 700 bpm. The AV node only allows some of the impulses to pass through to the ventricles, generating an irregularly irregular rhythm that is completely chaotic and unpredictable.

## Causes

Atrial fibrillation can occur in young patients with no history of cardiac disease. Acute alcohol toxicity can precipitate an episode of atrial fibrillation in otherwise healthy patients. However, atrial fibrillation commonly occurs in the presence of underlying heart disease, lung disease, hyperthyroidism or myocardial infarction.

## Signs and Symptoms

Patients with atrial fibrillation may be asymptomatic. However, ventricular rates greater than 100 bpm are usually not tolerated well because the filling time for the ventricles is significantly reduced. Symptoms may include shortness of breath, palpitations, chest pain, light-headedness, dizziness and fatigue. Hypotension, syncope and heart failure can occur.

## ECG Findings

The two key features of atrial fibrillation on ECG are the absence of discrete P waves and the presence of irregularly irregular QRS complexes (Figure 7-13). The baseline appears flat or undulates slightly, producing **fibrillatory waves**.



**Regularity:** irregularly irregular  
**Rate:** varies with conduction; < 100 bpm is controlled; > 100 bpm is uncontrolled (rapid ventricular response)  
**P wave:** none; fibrillation (f) waves; chaotic baseline  
**QRS complex:** < 0.12 second  
**PR interval:** not discernible

Figure 7-13 | Atrial fibrillation

## Ventricular Tachycardia

Ventricular tachycardia occurs when a ventricular focus below the bundle of His becomes the new pacemaker. The ventricles contract rapidly (usually at a rate faster than 100 bpm) and usually with a regular rhythm. The rapid ventricular rate significantly diminishes cardiac output and can only be sustained for a short period before the patient becomes hemodynamically compromised. Ventricular tachycardia can quickly turn into ventricular fibrillation, leading to cardiac arrest.

Torsades de pointes is a highly unstable form of polymorphic ventricular tachycardia that may revert to sinus rhythm or degenerate into pulseless ventricular tachycardia or ventricular fibrillation.

## Causes

Ventricular tachycardia usually occurs in the presence of heart disease or damage, such as that caused by acute or remote myocardial infarction or cardiomyopathy. There is a significant risk for ventricular tachycardia after myocardial infarction, and this risk can last for weeks, months or years. Ventricular tachycardia may also be precipitated by medications that prolong the QT interval, including amiodarone or other antiarrhythmics and certain antibiotics and antidepressants. Electrolyte derangements (including hypocalcemia, hypomagnesemia and hypokalemia) can also be involved.

Torsades de pointes most often accompanies prolonged QT intervals, which may be the result of a congenital condition, acute myocardial infarction, medications or drug–drug interactions. The risk for torsades de pointes is increased when the QTc is greater than 500 milliseconds (0.5 second).

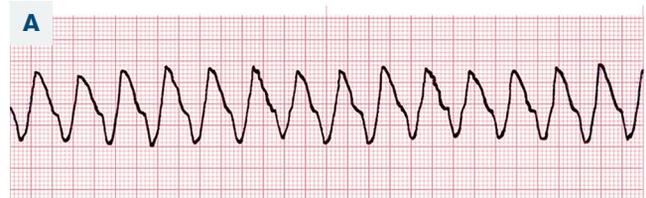
## Signs and Symptoms

With sustained ventricular tachycardia, signs and symptoms of reduced cardiac output and hemodynamic compromise develop, including chest pain, hypotension and loss of consciousness.

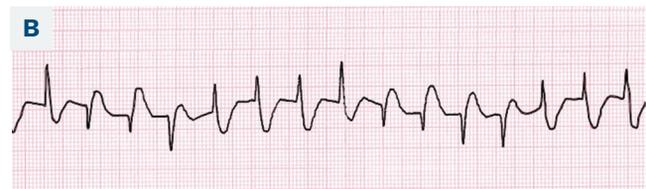
## ECG Findings

In ventricular tachycardia, the QRS complexes are wide (lasting longer than 0.12 second). When there is only one ectopic focus in the ventricles, **monomorphic ventricular tachycardia** is seen on the ECG (i.e., the QRS complexes are generally the same shape; Figure 7-14A). When there are two or more ectopic foci, **polymorphic ventricular tachycardia** is seen. In polymorphic ventricular tachycardia, the QRS complexes vary in shape and rate (see Figure 7-14B).

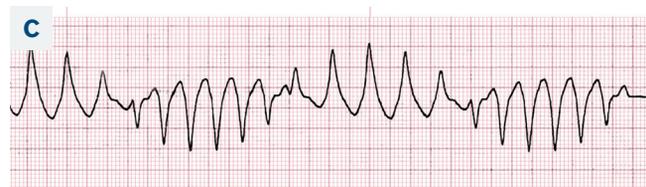
When the QRS complexes in ventricular tachycardia are polymorphic and wide, the rhythm may be torsades de pointes. In torsades de pointes (“twisting of the points”), the QRS complexes appear to pivot around the isoelectric line, deflecting upward and then downward, with their amplitude becoming smaller and larger, then smaller again (see Figure 7-14C). The rhythm may be regular or irregular. The rate is faster than 200 bpm. P waves are not visible, and the QRS complexes are wide (lasting longer than 0.12 second) and difficult to measure.



**Regularity:** regular  
**Rate:** > 100 bpm  
**P wave:** not discernible  
**QRS complex:**  $\geq 0.12$  second, uniform in shape  
**PR interval:** not discernible



**Regularity:** irregular (can appear regular due to fast rate)  
**Rate:** > 100 bpm  
**P wave:** not discernible  
**QRS complex:**  $\geq 0.12$  second, variable in shape  
**PR interval:** not discernible



**Regularity:** regular or irregular  
**Rate:** > 200 bpm  
**P wave:** not discernible  
**QRS complex:**  $\geq 0.12$  second, variable in shape  
**PR interval:** not discernible

Figure 7-14 | Ventricular tachycardia. (A) Monomorphic ventricular tachycardia. (B) Polymorphic ventricular tachycardia. (C) Torsades de pointes.



## Practice Note

Monomorphic ventricular tachycardia is more likely caused by a chronic condition, such as scarring from a healed infarction. It may also be seen with reentrant rhythms. Polymorphic ventricular tachycardia is more likely caused by an acute condition, such as ischemia, current infarction or profound electrolyte disturbance.

## Patient Assessment

### Rapid Assessment

The patient's appearance on rapid assessment can vary widely, depending on the arrhythmia. The patient may appear to be in minimal distress, show signs of hemodynamic compromise (e.g., pale, mottled or cyanotic skin) or show signs related to the underlying cause of the arrhythmia (e.g., pain, diaphoresis).

### Primary Assessment

Conduct a primary assessment following the ABCDE approach and provide care as needed. Obtain and monitor the patient's vital signs. Establish cardiac monitoring, pulse oximetry and vascular access, and be prepared to provide CPR and defibrillation if the patient's condition deteriorates. Provide the minimal level of supplemental oxygen needed to maintain an oxygen saturation of at least 94% to 99% and provide assistance with ventilation if needed. Assess level of consciousness in patients who appear to have changes in mental status. Obtain a 12-lead ECG if time and resources permit.

### Secondary Assessment

The goals of the secondary assessment are to:

- Identify signs and symptoms and determine whether they are being caused by the arrhythmia or another condition.
- Further determine the severity of the signs and symptoms.
- Identify the arrhythmia, if not done as part of the primary assessment.
- Identify potentially reversible causes of the arrhythmia.

### History

Key information to elicit during the history includes:

- A description of the patient's symptoms, including a full description of symptoms such as chest pain or syncope.
- A medical history of arrhythmias, cardiac disorders or cardiac surgery.
- The presence of comorbid conditions, including cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease and thyroid disease.
- Current medications, including antiarrhythmic agents.

### Physical Examination

Obtain and monitor the patient's vital signs and perform a physical examination.

## Diagnostic Tests

A 12-lead ECG aids in further identifying the arrhythmia. Additionally, a complete blood count, comprehensive metabolic panel, arterial blood gases and cardiac markers may be considered.

## Approach to the Patient

### Bradyarrhythmia

The *Adult Bradyarrhythmia* Code Card summarizes the approach to a patient with a bradyarrhythmia.

### Assess and Recognize

When bradyarrhythmia is suspected, the team takes actions to ensure adequate airway, breathing and circulation, including obtaining and monitoring vital signs, establishing cardiac monitoring and pulse oximetry, administering supplemental oxygen if needed and ensuring vascular access. If time and resources permit, a 12-lead ECG should be obtained. Because the rhythm may change to a cardiac arrest rhythm, the team should be prepared to initiate CPR and defibrillation.

Because care depends on whether the patient has adequate perfusion or is hemodynamically compromised, assessing indicators of perfusion status (such as mental status, blood pressure and pulses) is key. Findings that may suggest that the patient is experiencing hemodynamic compromise include changes in mental status, ischemic chest discomfort, hypotension, signs of shock or acute heart failure.

### Care

Throughout treatment, work to determine the underlying cause of the bradycardia and continually reassess the patient's condition. Clinical signs of improved cardiac output include an improved peripheral pulse, an increase in blood pressure, an improved level of consciousness, and improved skin color and temperature.

Treatment pathways depend on whether the patient has adequate perfusion or hemodynamic compromise.

### Bradyarrhythmia/No Hemodynamic Compromise

If the patient is not showing signs and symptoms of hemodynamic compromise, the patient's condition should be monitored (cardiac monitoring, noninvasive blood pressure monitoring, vital signs). A 12-lead ECG may be obtained and an effort should be made to identify and

address the underlying cause of the bradyarrhythmia. Consider expert consultation.

## Bradyarrhythmia/Hemodynamic Compromise

If the patient has signs of hemodynamic compromise, initiate treatment immediately (Figure 7-15). It may be necessary to implement multiple treatment measures simultaneously. First-line therapy is with atropine.

### Practice Note

If at any point atropine is not effective, consider transcutaneous pacing or  $\beta$ -adrenergic agonist therapy. Also consider transcutaneous pacing or  $\beta$ -adrenergic agonist therapy immediately if the patient has second-degree AV block type II or third-degree AV block.

Second-line therapies include transcutaneous pacing and  $\beta$ -adrenergic agonists. Consider expert consult and transvenous pacing if first- and second-line therapies are not effective.



Figure 7-15 | Interventions for bradyarrhythmia with hemodynamic compromise. (A) Atropine is considered first-line therapy. (B) Transcutaneous pacing is a second-line therapy.

## Atropine

Atropine is an anticholinergic drug that increases SA node firing by counteracting vagus nerve action to increase the heart rate. It is the first-line therapy for bradyarrhythmia with hemodynamic compromise. Administer a 1-mg bolus intravenously every 3 to 5 minutes, up to a maximum dose of 3 mg. If the atropine is having no effect, do not wait to reach the maximum dose of atropine before initiating second-line therapies.

### Practice Note

Use atropine with caution in patients with acute coronary ischemia or myocardial infarction because in these patients, atropine can cause adverse effects, including ventricular tachycardia or ventricular fibrillation.

## Transcutaneous Pacing

If at any point atropine is not effective, consider initiating transcutaneous pacing as a second-line therapy. Consider implementing transcutaneous pacing immediately if vascular access is difficult to achieve. Transcutaneous pacing can be painful. If the patient's clinical condition permits, administer sedation or analgesia before pacing. After initiating pacing, verify electrical capture (evidenced by wide QRS complexes and tall, broad T waves following each pacing spike on the monitor). Confirm mechanical capture by assessing the patient for clinical signs of improved cardiac output.

## $\beta$ -Adrenergic Agonists

Epinephrine or dopamine may be administered to patients with symptomatic bradycardia as an alternative second-line therapy. These medications may also be considered when the cause of the bradyarrhythmia is an overdose with a  $\beta$ -blocker or calcium channel blocker. The initial dose is 2 to 10 mcg/min by IV infusion for epinephrine or 5 to 20 mcg/kg/min by IV infusion for dopamine, and then the dose is titrated to the patient's response.

## Tachyarrhythmia

The *Adult Tachyarrhythmia* Code Card summarizes the approach to a patient with a tachyarrhythmia.

## Assess and Recognize

When tachyarrhythmia is suspected, the team takes actions to ensure adequate airway, breathing and circulation, including obtaining and monitoring vital signs, establishing cardiac monitoring and pulse

oximetry, administering supplemental oxygen if needed and ensuring vascular access. If time and resources permit, a 12-lead ECG should be obtained. Because the rhythm may change to a cardiac arrest rhythm, the team should be prepared to initiate CPR and defibrillation.

When a patient is found to have tachyarrhythmia with a pulse, take a three-step approach to determining appropriate care.

- First, look at the heart rate. Tachycardia caused by a systemic condition is usually associated with a heart rate between 100 and 150 bpm, whereas tachyarrhythmias are usually associated with heart rates greater than 150 bpm. If the heart rate is between 100 and 150 bpm, the tachycardia is most likely sinus tachycardia. Search for an underlying systemic cause (such as dehydration, blood loss, fever, infection or anxiety) and treat that first. If the heart rate is 150 bpm or more, the tachycardia is likely caused by an arrhythmia.



### Practice Note

Even when a patient's heart rate is between 100 and 150 bpm, signs of hemodynamic compromise should be sought and, if found, treatment for tachyarrhythmia with hemodynamic compromise should be initiated.

- Next, if the patient's heart rate is greater than 150 bpm and the tachycardia is not presumed to be sinus tachycardia, determine whether the patient has adequate perfusion or is hemodynamically compromised. A patient who is showing signs and symptoms of hemodynamic compromise despite initial management of airway and breathing requires immediate therapy with synchronized cardioversion.
- Finally, if the patient's heart rate is greater than 150 bpm, the tachycardia is not presumed to be sinus tachycardia and the patient is not showing signs of hemodynamic compromise, determine whether the QRS complexes are narrow ( $< 0.12$  second) or wide ( $\geq 0.12$  second).

### Care

Throughout treatment, work to determine the underlying cause of the tachycardia and continually reassess the patient's clinical condition.

#### Sinus Tachycardia

If the patient's heart rate is between 100 and 150 bpm and the patient is not showing signs of hemodynamic compromise, the patient's condition should be monitored (e.g., cardiac monitoring, noninvasive blood pressure monitoring, vital signs). A 12-lead ECG may be obtained

and an effort should be made to identify and address the underlying cause of the tachycardia.

#### Tachyarrhythmia with a Pulse/Hemodynamic Compromise

When a patient with tachyarrhythmia with a pulse has signs of hemodynamic compromise, synchronized cardioversion is indicated (Figure 7-16). If the patient's condition allows, administer sedation before initiating cardioversion. Follow the device manufacturer's recommendations for energy doses. Consider adenosine (6 mg via rapid IV push followed by a rapid 10- to 20-mL normal saline flush) before synchronized cardioversion for a narrow-complex regular rhythm if vascular access is readily available. Do not delay cardioversion to administer adenosine.

If the tachyarrhythmia is refractory, consider the need to increase the energy level for the next cardioversion and the use of an antiarrhythmic medication (procainamide, amiodarone or sotalol.) Also consider underlying causes and expert consultation.

#### Narrow-Complex Supraventricular Tachycardia/No Hemodynamic Compromise

If the patient is not showing signs of hemodynamic compromise, the QRS complex is narrow and the rhythm is regular, attempt vagal maneuvers (Table 7-1) to break the tachyarrhythmia. Consider adenosine (6 mg via rapid IV push followed by a 10- to 20-mL normal saline flush) if the rhythm is regular. An additional 12-mg dose of adenosine (followed by a normal saline flush) may be given if the rhythm does not convert. Consider a calcium channel blocker or  $\beta$ -blocker if the rhythm is not regular, adenosine is ineffective or the tachyarrhythmia recurs. Consider expert consultation.



Figure 7-16 | If a patient with tachyarrhythmia and a pulse has signs of hemodynamic compromise, the treatment is synchronized cardioversion.

Table 7-1 | Vagal Maneuvers

Maneuver	Method
Valsalva maneuver	Instruct the patient to exhale forcefully against a closed airway or blow through an occluded straw.
Cold stimulus	Apply a cold stimulus (e.g., an ice pack or a washcloth soaked in cold water) to the patient's nose and mouth for 10 seconds.
Gagging	Touch a tongue depressor to the back of the patient's throat to stimulate the gag reflex.
Carotid massage	With the patient's neck extended and the head turned away, apply pressure underneath the angle of the jaw in a circular motion for 10 seconds (not recommended for patients with carotid artery stenosis or a history of smoking).

### Wide-Complex Ventricular Tachycardia/No Hemodynamic Compromise

If the rhythm is wide (QRS complex  $\geq 0.12$  second), regular and monomorphic and the patient does not have signs of hemodynamic compromise, the rhythm may be

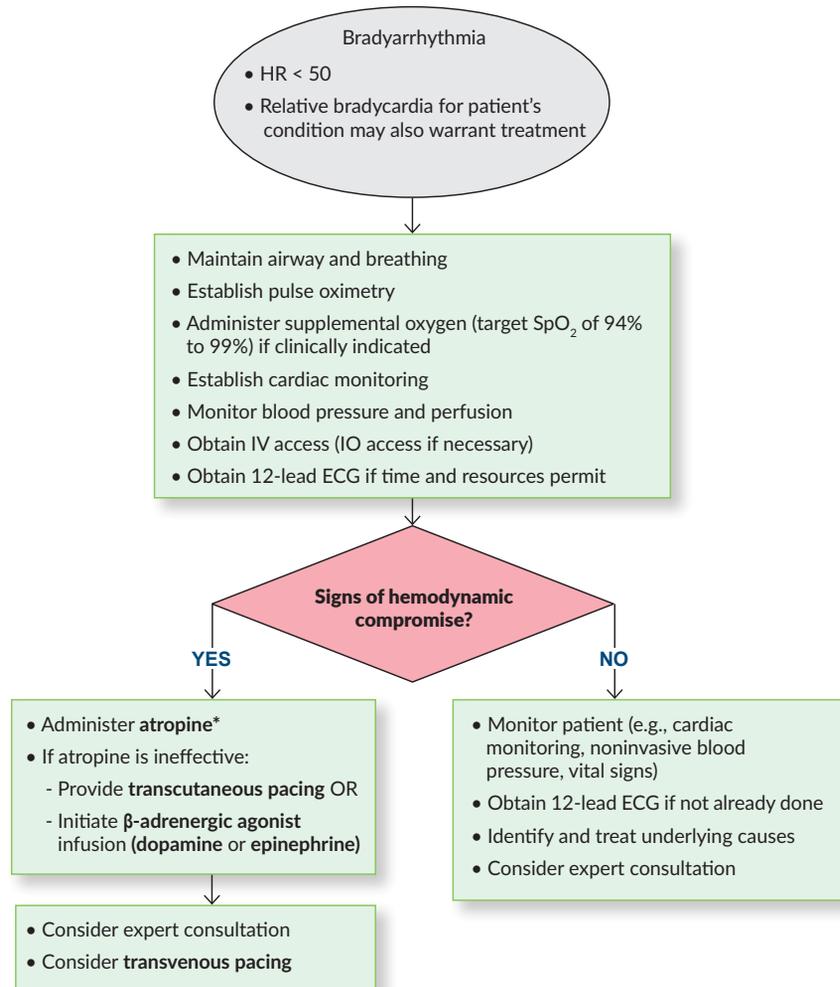
supraventricular tachycardia with aberrant conduction. In this case, consider adenosine (6 mg via rapid IV push followed by a 10- to 20-mL normal saline flush). For a patient without signs of hemodynamic compromise and a wide rhythm, consider an antiarrhythmic medication (procainamide, amiodarone or sotalol).

- **Procainamide:** Avoid in patients with known prolonged QT intervals or congestive heart failure. Administer 20 to 50 mg/min until the arrhythmia is suppressed, hypotension develops, the QRS duration increases by more than 50% or a maximum dose of 17 mg/kg is given. The maintenance infusion is 1 to 4 mg/min.
- **Amiodarone:** Administer 150 mg over 10 minutes. Repeat as needed if the tachyarrhythmia recurs. The maintenance infusion is 1 mg/min for the first 6 hours.
- **Sotalol:** Avoid in patients with known prolonged QT intervals. Administer 100 mg (1.5 mg/kg) over 5 minutes.

If the tachyarrhythmia is refractory, consider the underlying cause, cardioversion, a change to the antiarrhythmic medication (e.g., adjustment of the dose, a change to a different antiarrhythmic medication or the addition of another antiarrhythmic medication) and expert consultation.

# ADULT BRADYARRHYTHMIA

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## Medications

### Atropine

- 1 mg IV bolus every 3 to 5 min, up to a max dose of 3 mg

### Dopamine

- 5 to 20 mcg/kg/min titrated to effect

### Epinephrine

- 2 to 10 mcg/min titrated to effect

## Signs of Hemodynamic Compromise

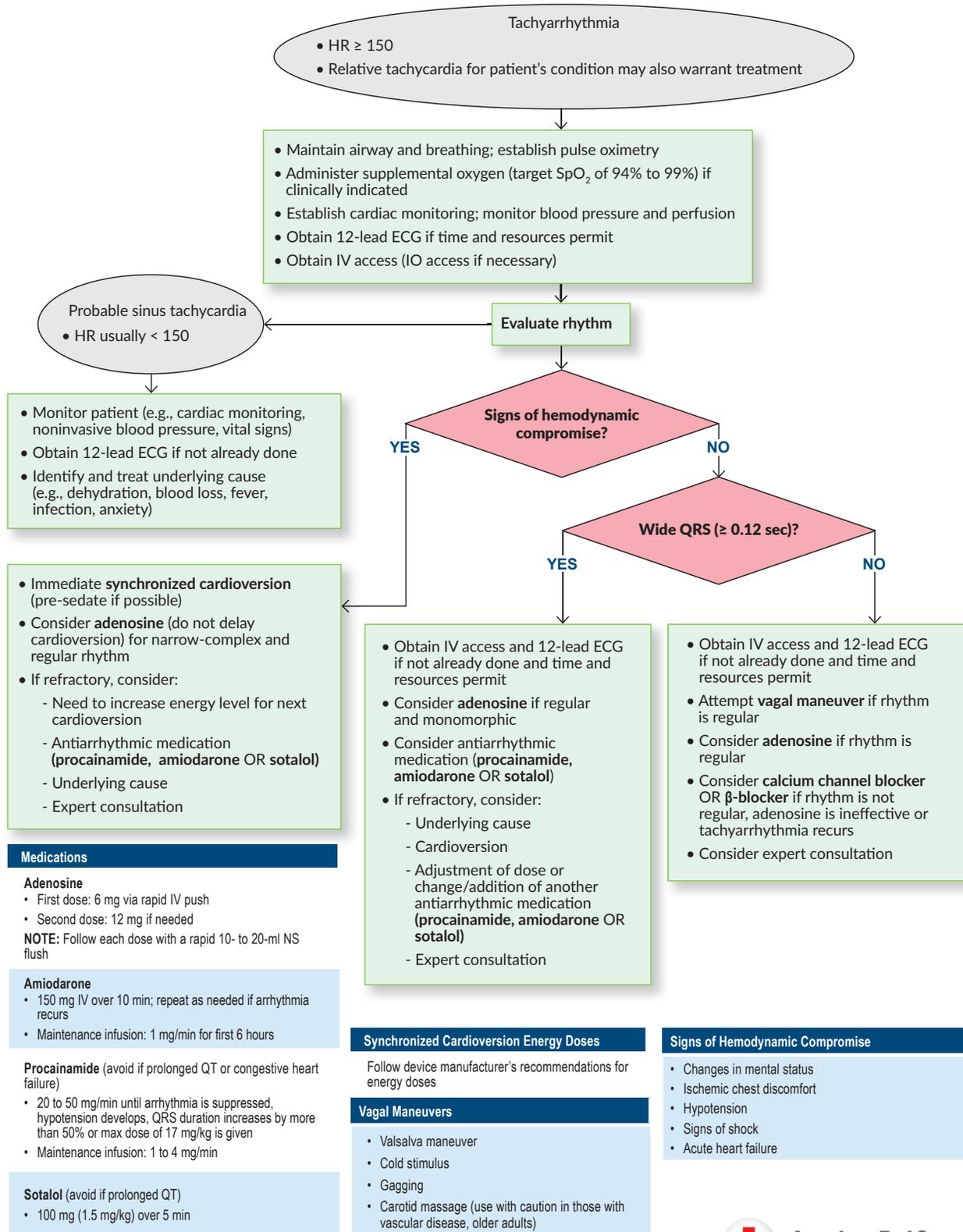
- Changes in mental status
- Ischemic chest discomfort
- Hypotension
- Signs of shock
- Acute heart failure

\*Consider implementing transcutaneous pacing or β-adrenergic agonist therapy immediately for patients with second-degree AV block type II or third-degree AV block. Consider implementing transcutaneous pacing immediately if vascular access is difficult to achieve.



# ADULT TACHYARRHYTHMIA

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# Cardiac Arrest

## Introduction

In the United States, approximately 200,000 cases of in-hospital cardiac arrest and approximately 395,000 cases of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest occur annually. No matter where cardiac arrest occurs, patient outcomes are improved when each link in the Cardiac Chain of Survival is implemented swiftly and properly.

# Recognizing Cardiac Arrest Rhythms

Rhythms associated with cardiac arrest include ventricular fibrillation, pulseless ventricular tachycardia, pulseless electrical activity (PEA) and asystole. The first step in recognizing a cardiac arrest rhythm is establishing that the patient does not have a pulse by checking for a carotid pulse.

## Ventricular Fibrillation

Ventricular fibrillation is characterized by erratic, rapid and completely ineffective depolarization of the ventricles. Rather than contracting, the ventricles quiver. This rhythm is fatal if not corrected quickly.

### Causes

Precipitating causes of ventricular fibrillation include myocardial ischemia or infarction, shock, electrocution, stimulant overdose and ventricular tachycardia (including torsades de pointes).

### ECG Findings

The rhythm is irregular and there are no discernible P waves, QRS complexes or T waves (Figure 8-1). The waveforms that are seen may vary in amplitude, from coarse to fine. As ventricular fibrillation progresses, the waveforms may change from coarse to fine and eventually disappear (asystole).



**Regularity:** irregular  
**Rate:** not measurable  
**P wave:** not discernible  
**QRS complex:** chaotic, not discernible  
**PR interval:** not discernible

Figure 8-1 | Ventricular fibrillation

## Pulseless Ventricular Tachycardia

Patients in ventricular tachycardia may or may not have a pulse. Pulseless ventricular tachycardia occurs when the ventricles are not contracting effectively enough to

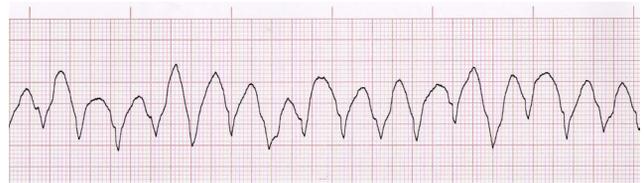
sustain sufficient cardiac output.

### Causes

The underlying causes of pulseless ventricular tachycardia are the same as for ventricular tachycardia (see Chapter 7) and include heart disease or damage (as from myocardial infarction), certain medications and electrolyte imbalances.

### ECG Findings

In pulseless ventricular tachycardia, the ventricular rate is usually greater than 180 bpm, and the QRS complexes are very wide (Figure 8-2).



**Regularity:** regular or irregular  
**Rate:** usually > 180 bpm  
**P wave:** not discernible  
**QRS complex:**  $\geq 0.12$  second  
**PR interval:** not discernible

Figure 8-2 | Pulseless ventricular tachycardia

## Pulseless Electrical Activity

**Pulseless electrical activity (PEA)** is a term used to describe several rhythms that are organized on ECG (i.e., the QRS complexes are similar in appearance) but the patient has no palpable pulse. The heart's conduction system is functioning, but the myocardium is not contracting (or contracting too weakly) to produce cardiac output, or volume is not sufficient to maintain cardiac output.

### Causes

PEA may be seen immediately after successful defibrillation of a patient with ventricular fibrillation or pulseless ventricular tachycardia. But when PEA is the presenting rhythm ("primary PEA"), the underlying cause is usually a condition that either affects contractility or ejection (e.g., hypoxia, acidosis, anterior wall myocardial infarction) or leads to inadequate preload (e.g., severe hypovolemia, pulmonary embolism, tension pneumothorax, cardiac tamponade, right ventricular infarction).

## ECG Findings

In PEA, the monitor shows an identifiable rhythm but no pulse can be palpated. The rhythm may be sinus, atrial, junctional or ventricular in origin. The rate may be fast or slow. The QRS complexes are similar in appearance and may be narrow or wide. When the cause of the PEA is cardiac in origin, it is most common to see a slow rate and wide QRS complexes. Noncardiac causes of PEA are often associated with a rapid rate and narrow QRS complexes.

## Asystole

In asystole, there is no electrical activity and therefore no contraction.

### Causes

Asystole is often the terminal rhythm in untreated pulseless ventricular tachycardia or ventricular fibrillation or when resuscitation efforts are unsuccessful. Other causes include narcotic drug overdose, hypothermia, myocardial infarction, pulmonary embolism, hyperkalemia, hypoxia (drowning, suffocation) and indirect lightning strike.

## ECG Findings

Asystole is characterized by a lack of discernible electrical activity on ECG, which results in a “flatline” appearance (Figure 8-3). Very rarely, the sinoatrial (SA) node may generate impulses that cause atrial depolarization but are completely blocked at the atrioventricular (AV) node, resulting in “P-wave asystole.”



### Practice Note

Care must be taken to differentiate asystole from fine ventricular fibrillation. To do this, quickly look at another lead to evaluate the electrical activity in a different plane.



**Regularity:** not discernible  
**Rate:** not discernible  
**P wave:** usually absent  
**QRS complex:** not discernible  
**PR interval:** not discernible

Figure 8-3 | Asystole



### Practice Note

Although asystole is said to have a “flatline” appearance on ECG, there is some fluctuation from the baseline in asystole. A completely flat baseline is likely the result of disconnected leads or equipment problems.

## Reversible Causes of Cardiac Arrest (Hs and Ts)

When caring for a patient in cardiac arrest, it is important to recognize reversible causes for the arrest and address them (Figure 8-4). This is especially important with PEA and asystole, which often have reversible underlying causes. The mnemonic *Hs and Ts* can help you to remember the reversible causes of cardiac arrest (Box 8-1).

While resuscitation is underway, review the patient’s medical history with the providers who were caring for the patient at the time of the arrest or family members to identify details that could point to one of the Hs or Ts as an underlying cause (Table 8-1). Of particular importance are changes in the patient’s clinical condition leading up to the arrest, disorders or situations that could predispose a patient to developing one of the Hs or Ts, risk factors for cardiac and pulmonary conditions and medication use.



Figure 8-4 | While resuscitation is underway, consider possible underlying causes for the cardiac arrest (Hs and Ts) with the team.

- Hs
- Hypovolemia
  - Hypoxia
  - Hydrogen ion excess (acidosis)
  - Hyper- or hypokalemia
  - Hypothermia
- Ts
- Toxins
  - Tamponade
  - Tension pneumothorax
  - Thrombosis (pulmonary embolism)
  - Thrombosis (myocardial infarction)

Diagnostic studies that may prove useful for identifying underlying causes of the cardiac arrest include a 12-lead ECG, arterial blood gases, a serum electrolyte panel, chest radiography and bedside ultrasonography. Although some diagnostic studies can be done while resuscitation efforts are underway, others (such as a 12-lead ECG) should be delayed until after return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) is achieved.



### Practice Note

Ultrasonography can be a useful tool for recognizing several underlying causes of cardiac arrest, including pulmonary embolism, tension pneumothorax, cardiac tamponade and hypovolemia. Consider use of ultrasonography if the equipment and a skilled technician are readily available, and if doing so will not impede or delay resuscitation efforts. Point-of-care ultrasonography should not have a role in prognostication for cardiac arrest.

### Hypovolemia

Hypovolemia (a reduction of fluid volume in the circulatory system) develops because of excessive blood or fluid loss (for example, because of trauma, internal bleeding or severe dehydration). A fluid challenge can aid in determining whether hypovolemia is contributing to the cardiac arrest.

### Hypoxia

Suspect hypoxia in any patient who had respiratory difficulties preceding cardiac arrest. To address hypoxia as a cause of cardiac arrest, ensure that the patient's airway is patent and provide adequate ventilation and supplemental oxygen.

Table 8-1 | Clinical Clues to Underlying Causes of Cardiac Arrest (Hs and Ts)

Reversible Cause	History May Be Significant for:	Monitoring and Diagnostic Tests
<b>Hypovolemia</b>	Internal or external bleeding, dehydration, diabetes insipidus, diarrhea/vomiting, peritonitis, profound preload compromise (e.g., right ventricular infarction)  Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: hypotension; oliguria; cyanosis; rapid, shallow breathing; confusion	12-lead ECG: narrow-complex ventricular tachycardia  15-lead ECG: ST-segment elevation in lead V <sub>4R</sub>
<b>Hypoxia</b>	Trauma, chronic or acute respiratory disorder  Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: respiratory distress, respiratory failure, respiratory arrest	Peri-arrest ETCO <sub>2</sub> : > 50 mmHg  Peri-arrest arterial oxygen saturation: < 90%
<b>Hydrogen ion excess</b>	<b>Metabolic acidosis</b> Diabetes, sepsis, renal disease, alcoholism  Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: lethargy, drowsiness, hyperventilation, headache  <b>Respiratory acidosis</b> Chronic or acute respiratory disorder  Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: tachycardia, tachypnea, hypercapnia, hypertension, hypoxemia, hypercarbia, confusion, headache	Arterial blood gases: pH < 7.35  ETCO <sub>2</sub> : < 29 mmHg in metabolic acidosis, > 50 mmHg in respiratory acidosis

Table 8-1 | Clinical Clues to Underlying Causes of Cardiac Arrest (Hs and Ts) (continued)

Reversible Cause	History May Be Significant for:	Monitoring and Diagnostic Tests
<b>Hyper- or hypokalemia</b>	<p><b>Hyperkalemia</b> Renal disease, trauma, burns, potassium supplementation</p> <p>Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: cramps, muscle twitching, hypotension</p> <p><b>Hypokalemia</b> Renal disease, diuretics, eating disorder, diarrhea/vomiting</p> <p>Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: muscle weakness or spasms, confusion, drowsiness</p>	<p><b>Hyperkalemia</b> 12-lead ECG: wide QRS complexes and tall, pointed T waves</p> <p><b>Hypokalemia</b> 12-lead ECG: flat T waves, prominent U waves and possibly prolonged QT intervals</p>
<b>Hypothermia</b>	Exposure, drowning, fluid resuscitation	...
<b>Toxins</b>	Drug abuse, medications	...
<b>Tamponade</b>	<p>Chest trauma, pericarditis (lung/breast cancer, radiation therapy, post-myocardial infarction, infection, connective tissue disorders, chronic renal disease, postoperative complication)</p> <p>Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: dyspnea, tachypnea, tachycardia, anxiety, changes in mental status, hypotension, muffled heart sounds, jugular venous distension, pericardial friction rub, pulsus paradoxus</p>	<p>PEA rhythm with narrow QRS complexes, electrical alternans</p> <p>Bedside ultrasonography can aid in diagnosis</p>
<b>Tension pneumothorax</b>	<p>Chest trauma, thoracentesis, central venous catheter insertion</p> <p>Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: tachypnea, diminished or absent breath sounds, unequal chest expansion, tracheal deviation (late sign), jugular venous distension, hypotension, anxiety, diaphoresis, cyanosis, high peak inspiratory pressures (in patients receiving mechanical ventilation)</p>	<p>PEA rhythm with narrow QRS complexes</p> <p>Bedside ultrasonography can aid in diagnosis</p>
<b>Thrombosis (pulmonary embolism)</b>	<p>Abnormal clotting (cancer/cancer treatment, inherited disorder, cardiovascular disease, stroke, hormone therapy, history of deep venous thrombosis, anticoagulant therapy); stasis (bed rest, travel); vessel injury (post-surgical, central venous catheter, trauma)</p> <p>Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: dyspnea, tachycardia, pleuritic chest pain, hemoptysis, anxiety, diaphoresis, syncope</p>	Bedside ultrasonography can aid in diagnosis
<b>Thrombosis (myocardial infarction)</b>	<p>Coronary artery disease</p> <p>Peri-arrest signs and symptoms: chest pain/discomfort; dizziness, light-headedness or syncope; nausea or vomiting; dyspnea; diaphoresis; cyanosis</p>	12-lead ECG: ST-segment changes, T-wave inversion

## Hydrogen Ion Excess (Acidosis)

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Acidosis can impair cardiac function, in some cases to the point of cardiac arrest. Acidosis can occur in a multitude of conditions, including shock, diabetes and acute or chronic renal failure. Arterial blood gases are used to confirm the diagnosis of acidosis. In patients with metabolic acidosis, the administration of an initial dose of sodium bicarbonate (1 mEq/kg) may be indicated. If administering sodium bicarbonate, ensure adequate ventilation for removal of carbon dioxide or sodium bicarbonate may worsen intracellular and tissue acidosis.

## Hyperkalemia or Hypokalemia

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Potassium imbalances can precipitate cardiac arrest.

Suspect hyperkalemia in patients with acute or chronic renal failure and in those who had wide QRS complexes and tall, peaked T waves on ECG prior to the arrest. Several measures may be taken to reduce potassium levels, including administering sodium bicarbonate, glucose and insulin, or nebulized albuterol. Sodium bicarbonate is the preferred method of addressing hyperkalemia in patients in cardiac arrest because it causes a rapid shift in serum potassium level. Other therapies take much longer to work.

Suspect hypokalemia in patients with dehydration or overuse of diuretics. In hypokalemia, flat T waves, prominent U waves and possibly prolonged QT intervals may be seen on ECG before arrest. Treatment is intravenous administration of a dilute solution of potassium chloride.

## Hypothermia

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For patients with severe hypothermia (body temperature less than 86° F [30° C]) and cardiac arrest, core rewarming (with cardiopulmonary bypass, extracorporeal blood warming with partial bypass or thoracic lavage with warmed fluids) is indicated. Warmed fluids and warmed humidified oxygen may be administered as adjunctive therapies.

## Toxins

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Overdoses (of both illicit and therapeutic drugs) and poisoning can induce cardiac arrest. Drugs that are frequently implicated in cardiac arrest include

cocaine, methamphetamines, opioids (heroin, fentanyl),  $\beta$ -blockers, calcium channel blockers, digoxin and tricyclic antidepressants. Reversal agents are specific to the toxin (e.g., glucagon for  $\beta$ -blocker overdose, sodium bicarbonate for tricyclic antidepressant overdose, naloxone for opioid overdose).

## Tamponade

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Cardiac tamponade occurs when fluid accumulates in the pericardial sac, compressing the heart and preventing it from pumping effectively. Causes of cardiac tamponade include trauma, cancer, renal failure, infections and idiopathic pericarditis. Cardiac tamponade may also be seen postoperatively.

Pre-arrest physical examination findings may include the three cardinal signs of cardiac tamponade (Beck's triad): hypotension (weak pulse or narrow pulse pressure), muffled heart sounds and jugular venous distension. In a patient with PEA, narrow QRS complexes and **electrical alternans** (i.e., beat-to-beat variation in the amplitude of the QRS complexes) may be seen.

Treatment is pericardiocentesis (needle aspiration of fluid from the pericardial sac).

## Tension Pneumothorax

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Tension pneumothorax occurs when air accumulates in the pleural space, causing the lung on the affected side to collapse and the mediastinum to shift, compressing the heart and vena cava. Compression of the vena cava leads to impaired venous return and decreased cardiac output. Penetrating chest trauma is a common cause of tension pneumothorax, but the condition can also develop in older patients with underlying lung disease and in patients who smoke.

Pre-arrest physical examination findings may include hypotension, tachycardia, absent breath sounds on the affected side, jugular venous distension, hyperresonance on percussion and tracheal deviation away from the affected side (a late sign). Difficulty ventilating the patient may also be a sign of tension pneumothorax. In a patient with PEA, narrow QRS complexes should raise suspicion for tension pneumothorax as a possible underlying cause.

Initial treatment is with needle chest decompression or thoracostomy.

## Thrombosis (Pulmonary Embolism)

In massive pulmonary embolism, obstruction of the pulmonary artery and the release of vasoconstrictive mediators from the thrombus lead to cardiogenic shock, which can quickly lead to cardiac arrest. Conditions in the patient history associated with prolonged immobilization or venous stasis, hypercoagulability or damage to the veins should increase suspicion for pulmonary embolism as a potential cause of cardiac arrest. Witnessed cardiac arrest and respiratory distress before arrest also may point to pulmonary embolism as the cause. PEA is the initial rhythm in one-third to one-half of patients with cardiac arrest caused by pulmonary embolism. Fibrinolytic therapy may be initiated for patients with known or suspected pulmonary embolism.

## Thrombosis (Myocardial Infarction)

Myocardial infarction can lead to cardiac arrest. If a pre-arrest 15-lead ECG shows an inferior wall myocardial infarction with right ventricular involvement (evidenced by ST-segment elevation in lead  $V_{4R}$ ), then impaired preload is likely the cause of cardiac arrest and fluid bolus therapy should be provided during resuscitation. If a pre-arrest 12-lead ECG shows anterior wall myocardial infarction, then impaired contractility is the likely cause of cardiac arrest. When myocardial infarction is the suspected cause of cardiac arrest, a 12-lead ECG should be obtained after ROSC is achieved to guide therapy and inotropic support may be needed to address cardiogenic shock.

## Approach to the Patient

The *Adult Cardiac Arrest Code Card* summarizes the approach to a patient in cardiac arrest.

## Assess and Recognize

After determining that the patient is not responsive, not breathing and has no pulse, call for additional resources, the rapid response or resuscitation team and the resuscitation equipment or cart and initiate CPR immediately. Without interrupting high-quality CPR, attach the cardiac monitor/defibrillator and identify the arrest rhythm.

## Care

When a patient is in cardiac arrest, treatment focuses on providing high-quality CPR (see Chapter 2), providing shocks (if the rhythm is shockable) or early epinephrine (if the rhythm is nonshockable) and, if possible, determining and addressing the underlying cause. For nonshockable rhythms, epinephrine should be administered as early as possible. For shockable rhythms, medication administration should be delayed until after at least 2 shocks have been given. Placement of an advanced airway and establishment of capnography should be delayed until after at least 2 shocks have been administered (in the case of a shockable rhythm) or CPR has been provided for at least 2 minutes (in the case of a nonshockable rhythm).



### Practice Note

When a patient is receiving CPR, use capnography to monitor the effectiveness of compressions and for ROSC.



### Practice Note

If the airway and adequate ventilations can be maintained without placing an advanced airway, consider delaying placement until after ROSC is achieved. After placing an advanced airway, verify correct placement using clinical parameters and capnography, and secure the device.



### Practice Note

When an advanced airway has been placed in a patient who is in cardiac arrest, compressions should be delivered continuously (100 to 120 per minute) with no pauses for ventilations.

## Shockable Rhythms

Ventricular fibrillation and pulseless ventricular tachycardia require defibrillation as soon as possible. Because shocks may not be successful or, in the case of successful defibrillation, the resultant rhythm may not be adequate to sustain perfusion or a pulse, resume CPR immediately after each shock. After every 2 minutes of

CPR, reassess the rhythm (while minimizing interruptions to chest compressions; Figure 8-5) to determine next actions:

- If the rhythm is shockable, resume CPR immediately and administer 1 shock as soon as the defibrillator is charged.
- If the rhythm is nonshockable and organized, attempt to palpate a pulse. If a definitive pulse is palpated, the patient has achieved ROSC and post-cardiac arrest care should be initiated. If a definitive pulse cannot be palpated, resume CPR immediately and follow the code card pathway for a nonshockable rhythm.

### Practice Note

Pause compressions for rhythm analysis, even when using a device with artifact-filtering technology.

### Practice Note

Check the pulse only if an organized rhythm is present.

### Practice Note

During rhythm and pulse checks, pause compressions for no more than 10 seconds.

Repeat cycles of 2 minutes of CPR, rhythm check, shock and medication as appropriate until the rhythm check reveals a nonshockable rhythm, ROSC is achieved or the resuscitation effort is terminated. Clinical indications of ROSC include a palpable central pulse



Figure 8-5 | Minimize pauses in compressions to less than 10 seconds during rhythm and pulse checks.

and measurable blood pressure, a sudden and sustained increase in  $\text{ETCO}_2$  or an arterial pulse waveform on an arterial line when no compressions are being delivered. Additional signs (such as patient movement, normal breathing or coughing) may be present.

## Defibrillation

The energy dose depends on whether the defibrillator is biphasic or monophasic. Providers should familiarize themselves with the equipment used in their facility.

- If using a biphasic defibrillator, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the initial dose (usually between 120 and 200 joules). Subsequent doses should be the same as or higher than the initial dose. If the manufacturer's recommendations for the initial dose are not known, use the highest energy dose available for the first and all subsequent shocks.
- If using a monophasic defibrillator, set the energy dose at 360 joules. Use this energy dose for each subsequent shock.

If defibrillation is initially successful in terminating the cardiac arrest rhythm but ventricular fibrillation or pulseless ventricular tachycardia resumes, use the energy dose that successfully terminated the rhythm for subsequent shocks.

Always precede the delivery of a shock by announcing the intention to shock in a clear, succinct manner. Before delivering a shock, perform a visual scan to ensure that no one is touching the patient or the bed and that oxygen delivery devices have been removed and set aside, away from the patient.

When delivering the shock, face the team, rather than the defibrillator (Figure 8-6).

When administering shocks, minimize interruptions to CPR.

- Continue providing compressions while placing the defibrillator pads on the patient's chest.
- If the rhythm check reveals a shockable rhythm, resume compressions as soon as the charging sequence begins and continue until immediately before the shock button is pushed and the shock is delivered.
- Immediately after the shock is delivered, resume CPR for 2 minutes before pausing compressions to conduct a rhythm check. In some clinical situations, it may be appropriate to conduct a rhythm check after the shock is delivered and prior to immediately resuming compressions.



Figure 8-6 | Ensure that all providers are clear of the patient and the bed before delivering a shock. When delivering the shock, face the team, rather than the defibrillator.

## Medications

Various medications may be used in the treatment of ventricular fibrillation or pulseless ventricular tachycardia. Remember that in cardiac arrest, all medications administered through the IV or IO route should be followed by a 10- to 20-mL normal saline flush.

### Epinephrine

After 2 shocks have been delivered, epinephrine (1 mg IV/IO every 3 to 5 minutes) may be administered. The vasoconstrictive and positive inotropic effects of epinephrine help to increase cerebral and coronary perfusion. Evidence suggests that epinephrine is most effective when administered early.

### Amiodarone or Lidocaine

After 3 shocks have been delivered, consider administering an antiarrhythmic agent.

- **Amiodarone:** The initial dose of amiodarone is 300 mg administered as an IV/IO bolus. If the arrest rhythm persists, consider giving a second dose of 150 mg as an IV/IO bolus 3 to 5 minutes later.
- **Lidocaine:** Alternatively, lidocaine may be used. The initial dose is 1 to 1.5 mg/kg IV/IO, followed by 0.5 to 0.75 mg/kg IV/IO every 5 to 10 minutes, up to a maximum dose of 3 mg/kg.



### Practice Note

Choose one antiarrhythmic agent (amiodarone or lidocaine) and use it for the duration of the resuscitation effort. Do not alternate between the two.

## Nonshockable Rhythms

Defibrillation is not indicated when the rhythm is PEA or asystole. Management of these rhythms involves providing continuous high-quality CPR, administering epinephrine (1 mg IV/IO repeated every 3 to 5 minutes) as early as possible and performing rhythm checks after every 2 minutes of CPR. In addition, it is extremely important to look for and address potential underlying causes of the cardiac arrest. PEA and asystole often have an underlying cause, and unless that cause is addressed, the resuscitative effort will not be successful.

Repeat cycles of 2 minutes of CPR, rhythm check and medication as appropriate until the rhythm check reveals a shockable rhythm, ROSC is achieved or the resuscitation effort is terminated.

## Terminating the Resuscitation Effort

If it seems unlikely that ROSC will be achieved, the team leader may decide to terminate the resuscitation effort. Many factors are considered when deciding to terminate the resuscitation effort, including:

- How much time elapsed before CPR was initiated and the first shock was provided.
- The patient's health status before the cardiac arrest and the presence of comorbidities.
- The initial cardiac arrest rhythm.
- The duration of the resuscitation effort.
- Physiologic data, such as an  $\text{ETCO}_2$  level less than 10 mmHg after 20 minutes of high-quality CPR.

In general, the longer a patient is in cardiac arrest, the less likely the patient is to survive (or to survive with neurological function intact). However, in some situations it may be appropriate to consider prolonging the resuscitation effort, using specialized interventions or both. For example, it may be appropriate to prolong the resuscitation effort when more time is needed to address the underlying cause of the cardiac arrest (for example, drug overdose, hypothermia, pulmonary embolism). Specialized interventions, such as **extracorporeal cardiopulmonary resuscitation (ECPR)** may also be considered. In ECPR, large-bore cannulas are inserted into a major artery (e.g., the femoral artery) and the corresponding vein. Deoxygenated blood is removed from the body, passed through a membrane that removes the carbon dioxide and adds oxygen, warmed, filtered, and then pumped back into the body. For patients who are good candidates for the procedure,

survival and neurological outcomes may be improved with the use of ECPR (compared with outcomes associated with standard CPR). ECPR may also be considered for organ procurement in a post-cardiac arrest patient with circulatory determination of death.

## Cardiac Arrest in Pregnancy

The *Cardiac Arrest in Pregnancy Code Card* summarizes the approach to a pregnant patient in cardiac arrest.

Management of cardiac arrest during pregnancy presents unique challenges and considerations for resuscitation. Because the likelihood of a positive outcome for the fetus is increased when there is a positive outcome for the pregnant patient, the resuscitation team should stay focused on resuscitation of the pregnant patient. Fetal monitors, if present, should be removed immediately after pulselessness in cardiac arrest.

Gestational age is an important consideration when determining the approach to a pregnant patient in cardiac arrest. If the gestational age is not known and point-of-care ultrasound is available and able to be performed without impeding or delaying the resuscitation effort, it can be used to quickly estimate gestational age and to guide decision-making.

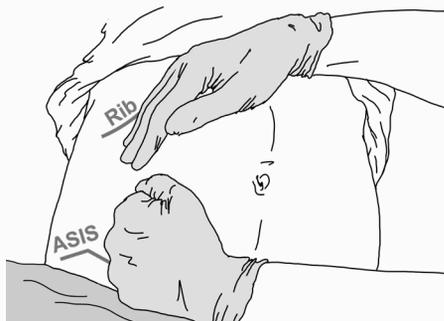
When the gestational age is known to be equal to or greater than 20 weeks or the fundus is at or above the umbilicus, **resuscitative cesarean delivery (RCD)** should be performed within 5 minutes from the time of arrest. RCD may be performed earlier than 5 minutes from the time of arrest and as soon as possible when the rhythm is nonshockable or ROSC has not been achieved or is intermittent after 2 cycles of CPR. In a pregnant patient with out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, RCD should be performed immediately upon the patient's arrival to the emergency department if the patient has not achieved ROSC.

The provision of high-quality CPR is essential to a successful resuscitative effort. For a pregnant patient in cardiac arrest, at least three (and preferably four) team members are needed to perform high-quality CPR: one to provide compressions, one (preferably two) to manage the airway and breathing, and one to provide continuous **left uterine displacement (LUD)** (Box 8-2) when the fundus is at or above the umbilicus. As in non-pregnant patients, ECG rhythm interpretation guides the management of cardiac arrest in the pregnant patient. Pad placement, timing and doses for defibrillation (for shockable rhythms) and medication administration (for shockable and nonshockable rhythms) are the same for pregnant patients as for non-pregnant patients. Because physiologic changes of pregnancy alter hemodynamics in the pregnant patient, IV access should be obtained

### Box 8-2 | Left Uterine Displacement

When the fundus is at or above the umbilicus, left uterine displacement (LUD) must be provided continuously throughout the resuscitation effort and until the infant is delivered, even if return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) is achieved. LUD relieves pressure placed on the inferior vena cava by the gravid uterus, increasing venous return to the heart to maximize cardiac output. In most cases, two hands are needed to achieve the necessary displacement.

#### To provide LUD from the patient's left side:



- Position yourself on the patient's left side.
- Reach across the patient, place both hands on the right side of the uterus, and pull the uterus to the left and up.

#### To provide LUD from the patient's right side:



- Position yourself on the patient's right side.
- Place both hands on the right side of the uterus, and push the uterus to the left and up.

above the level of the diaphragm. If IV access cannot be established, IO access should be obtained in the proximal humerus. It is important to consider and address underlying causes for the cardiac arrest in a pregnant patient, just as it is for a non-pregnant patient. The mnemonic BAACC TO LIFE™ can be used to remember causes of cardiac arrest in pregnancy (see the *Cardiac Arrest in Pregnancy Code Card*).

ECPR may be considered when there is no ROSC after RCD, or for refractory cardiac arrest when the uterus has not yet reached the umbilicus and the patient is in a facility that is capable of providing ECPR and caring for critically ill patients. As in non-pregnant patients, ECPR may also be considered to facilitate organ procurement following circulatory determination of death.

# ADULT CARDIAC ARREST

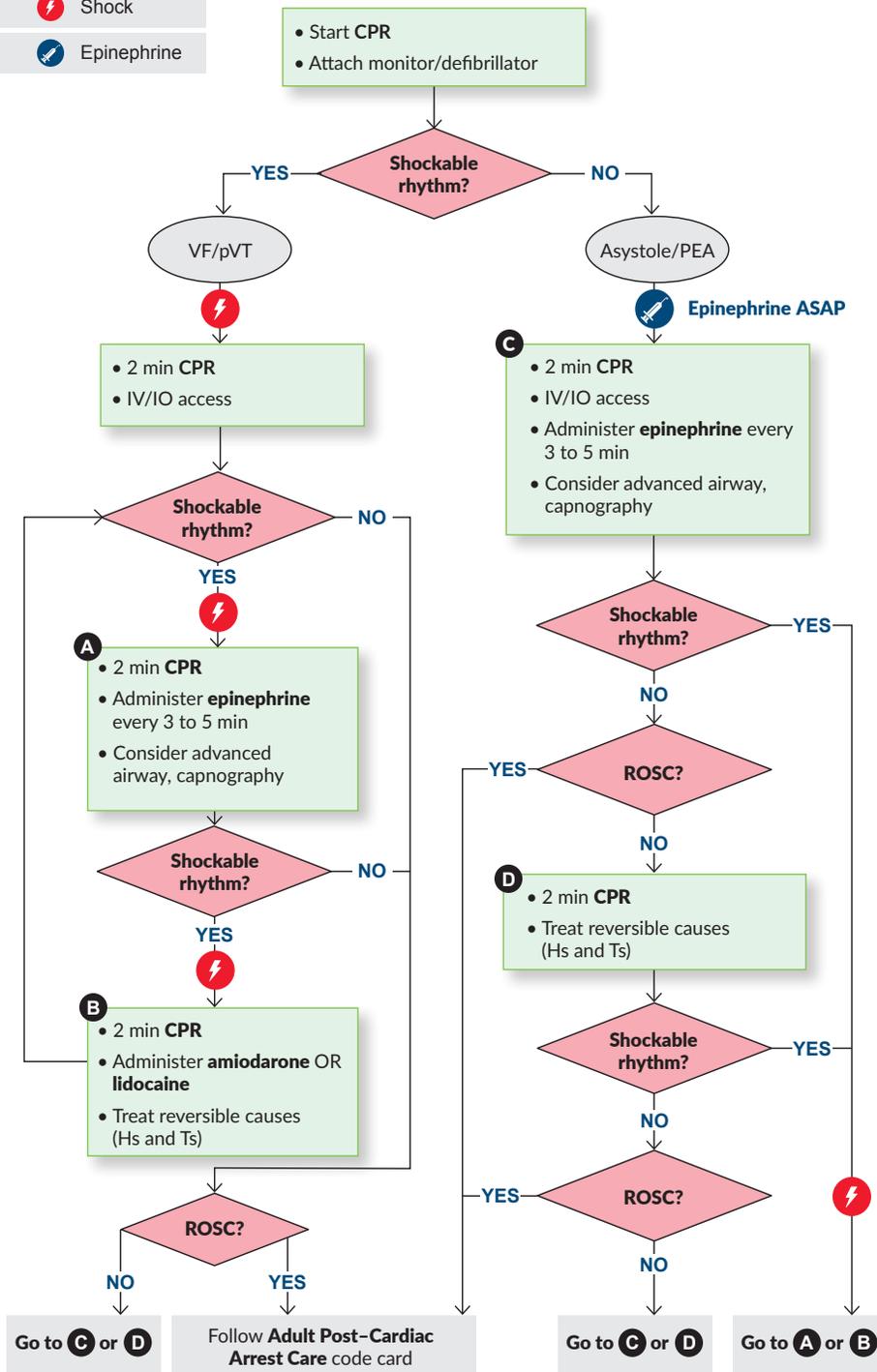
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Shock



Epinephrine



## Defibrillation Energy Doses

Biphasic: Per manufacturer's recommendations (e.g., 120 to 200 J) or if unknown, max available; subsequent doses equal to or greater than first dose  
Monophasic: 360 J for all doses

## Medications

### Epinephrine

- 1 mg IV/IO bolus every 3 to 5 min

### Amiodarone

- First dose: 300 mg IV/IO bolus
- Second dose: 150 mg after 3 to 5 min

### Lidocaine

- First dose: 1 to 1.5 mg/kg IV/IO
- Subsequent doses: 0.5 to 0.75 mg/kg IV/IO every 5 to 10 min, up to a max dose of 3 mg/kg

## High-Quality CPR

- Compress at a rate of 100 to 120 compressions per min and a depth of at least 2 inches (5 cm); allow for full chest recoil
- Minimize interruptions to chest compressions to less than 10 sec
- Avoid excessive ventilations. Each ventilation should last about 1 sec and make the chest begin to rise
- **Without advanced airway:** 30 compressions: 2 ventilations  
**With advanced airway:** continuous compressions; deliver 1 ventilation every 6 sec without pausing compressions
- Rotate compressor every 2 min
- Monitor CPR quality with ETCO<sub>2</sub> or arterial blood pressure (if available)

## What Is ROSC?

- Pulse and blood pressure
- Sudden and sustained increase in ETCO<sub>2</sub>
- Arterial pulse waveform on an a-line when no compressions are being delivered
- Additional signs, including patient movement, normal breathing or coughing, may be present

## Hs and Ts

- Hypovolemia
- Hypoxemia
- Hydrogen ion excess (acidosis)
- Hyperkalemia/hypokalemia
- Hypothermia
- Hyperglycemia/hypoglycemia
- Tamponade (cardiac)
- Tension pneumothorax
- Thrombosis (pulmonary embolism)
- Thrombosis (myocardial infarction)
- Toxins



# CARDIAC ARREST IN PREGNANCY

Supported by science reviews and guidelines of Obstetric Life Support™ (OBSL™)

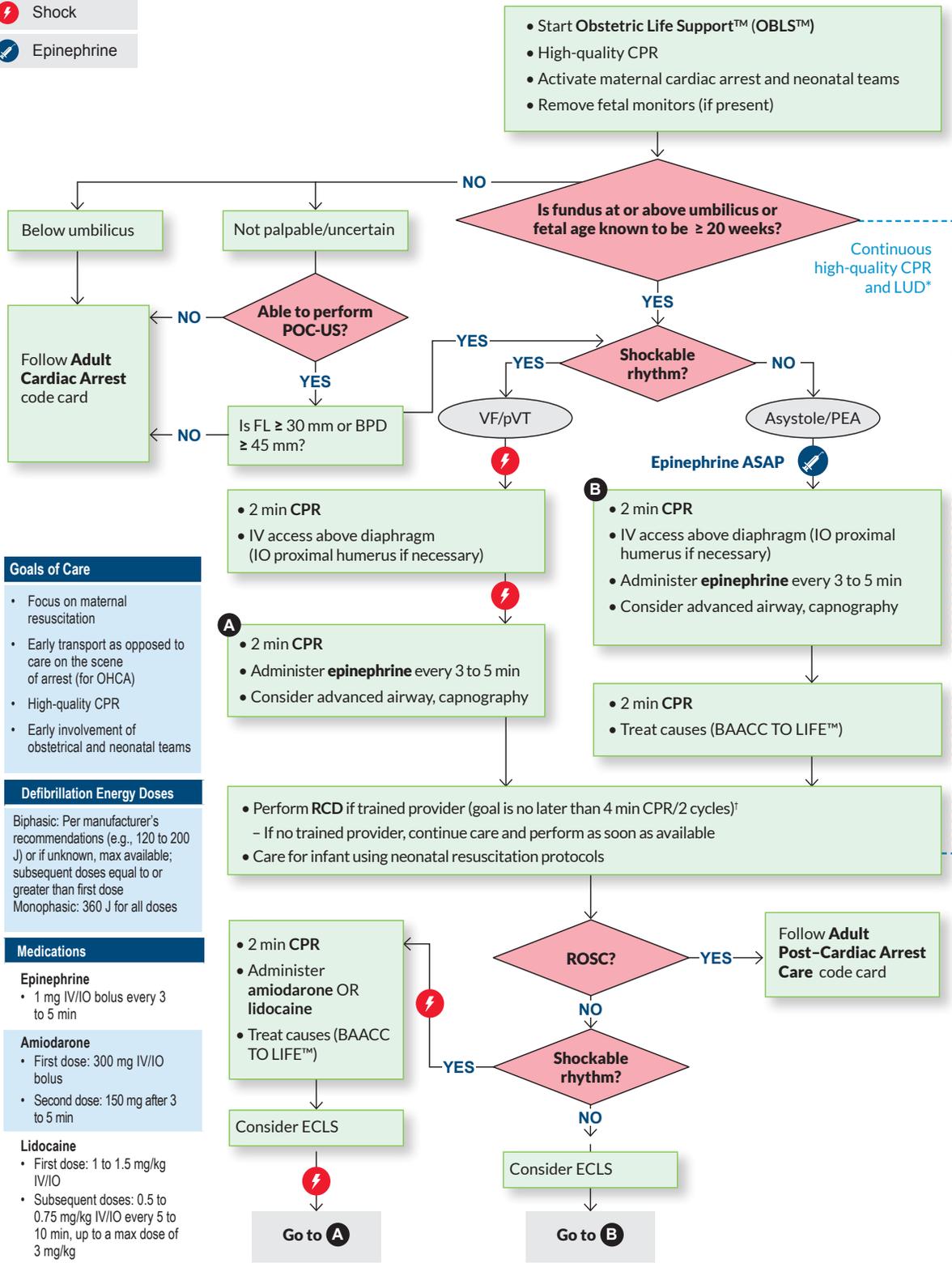
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Shock



Epinephrine



## Goals of Care

- Focus on maternal resuscitation
- Early transport as opposed to care on the scene of arrest (for OHCA)
- High-quality CPR
- Early involvement of obstetrical and neonatal teams

## Defibrillation Energy Doses

Biphasic: Per manufacturer's recommendations (e.g., 120 to 200 J) or if unknown, max available; subsequent doses equal to or greater than first dose  
 Monophasic: 360 J for all doses

## Medications

**Epinephrine**  
 • 1 mg IV/IO bolus every 3 to 5 min

**Amiodarone**  
 • First dose: 300 mg IV/IO bolus  
 • Second dose: 150 mg after 3 to 5 min

**Lidocaine**  
 • First dose: 1 to 1.5 mg/kg IV/IO  
 • Subsequent doses: 0.5 to 0.75 mg/kg IV/IO every 5 to 10 min, up to a max dose of 3 mg/kg

\*Provide continuous LUD until the infant is delivered, even if ROSC is achieved.

\*Although RCD should be performed at 4 min CPR/2 cycles, preparation needs to start as early in resuscitation as possible to allow this goal to be met.



# CARDIAC ARREST IN PREGNANCY

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## Prehospital Assessment and Care

- Prioritize transport over care at the scene (follow local protocols for destination decision)
- Provide high-quality CPR, including airway management and continuous LUD during transport. Provide continuous LUD until the infant is delivered, even if ROSC is achieved
- Alert receiving hospital and follow protocols for maternal cardiac arrest arrival

## Causes of Cardiac Arrest in Pregnancy (BAACC TO LIFE™)

<b>B:</b> bleeding	<b>T:</b> trauma	<b>L:</b> lung injury/acute respiratory distress syndrome
<b>A:</b> anesthesia	<b>O:</b> overdose (opioids, magnesium sulfate, other)	<b>I:</b> ions (glucose, potassium)
<b>A:</b> amniotic fluid embolism		<b>F:</b> fever (sepsis)
<b>C:</b> cardiovascular/cardiomyopathy		<b>E:</b> eclampsia/emergency hypertension
<b>C:</b> clot/cerebrovascular		

## Indications for Resuscitative Cesarean Delivery (RCD)

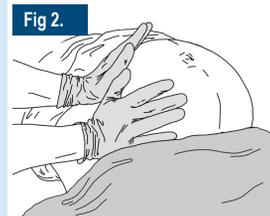
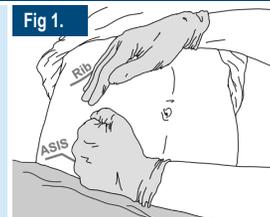
- No ROSC after 2 cycles of CPR in a pregnant patient with a fundus at or above umbilicus or fetal age known to be  $\geq 20$  weeks
- Intermittent ROSC after 2 cycles of CPR
- Nonshockable rhythm
- Immediately upon arrival to an emergency department without ROSC (for OHCA)

## High-Quality CPR

- Compress at a rate of 100 to 120 compressions per min and a depth of at least 2 inches (5 cm); allow for full chest recoil
- Minimize interruptions to chest compressions to less than 10 sec
- Avoid excessive ventilations. Each ventilation should last about 1 sec and make the chest begin to rise
- **Without advanced airway:** 30 compressions: 2 ventilations  
**With advanced airway:** continuous compressions; deliver 1 ventilation every 6 sec without pausing compressions
- Rotate compressor every 2 min
- Monitor CPR quality with ETCO<sub>2</sub> or arterial blood pressure (if available)

## Left Uterine Displacement (LUD)

- When the fundus is at or above the umbilicus, provide continuous LUD until the infant is delivered, even if return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) is achieved
- LUD relieves pressure placed on the inferior vena cava by the gravid uterus, increasing venous return to the heart to maximize cardiac output
- In most cases, two hands are needed to provide the necessary displacement
- From the patient's left side, reach across the patient, place both hands on the right side of the uterus, and pull the uterus to the left and up (**Fig. 1**)
- From the patient's right side, place both hands on the right side of the uterus and push the uterus to the left and up (**Fig. 2**)





# Post-Cardiac Arrest Care

## Introduction

Expert post-cardiac arrest care delivered by a multidisciplinary team can reduce both short- and long-term morbidity and mortality following the return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC). Post-cardiac arrest care includes interventions aimed at optimizing oxygenation, ventilation and perfusion; minimizing the systemic consequences of cardiac arrest; preventing future cardiac arrest; and assessing the patient's prognosis for recovery.

## Pathophysiologic Consequences of Cardiac Arrest

Among patients who achieve ROSC, the short-term mortality rate (i.e., within the first 24 hours of arrest) is high. This is largely a result of the global consequences of hypoxemia and the **ischemia/reperfusion response**, in addition to the precipitating cause of the cardiac arrest itself. Blood flow must be restored to tissues that have been deprived of oxygen in order to prevent tissue death; however, reperfusion of previously ischemic tissues can induce an inflammatory response that causes cellular injury in addition to that caused by the ischemia itself. This is known as the ischemia/reperfusion response.

Sometimes referred to as **post-cardiac arrest syndrome**, the pathophysiologic consequences of cardiac arrest comprise four key areas:

- **Brain injury.** Brain injury, caused by ischemia and cerebral edema, is a significant cause of morbidity and mortality in patients who achieve ROSC.
- **Myocardial dysfunction.** Myocardial stunning secondary to the ischemia/reperfusion response causes systolic and diastolic dysfunction, leading to hemodynamic instability in the immediate post-arrest period.
- **Systemic dysfunction.** The ischemia/reperfusion response can trigger a systemic inflammatory response, which can lead to multiple organ dysfunction. In addition, organs that are sensitive to changes in perfusion pressure, such as the kidneys, are at increased risk for reperfusion injury.
- **Persistent precipitating conditions.** The underlying cause of the cardiac arrest may continue to have pathophysiologic consequences during the post-arrest period.

The duration of the cardiac arrest (i.e., from collapse through ROSC) directly affects the severity of the post-cardiac arrest syndrome.

After ROSC, survival outcomes are improved when a multidisciplinary team of providers works to stabilize the patient, minimize complications, and diagnose and treat the underlying cause (Figure 9-1).

## Approach to the Patient

The *Adult Post-Cardiac Arrest Care Code Card* summarizes the approach to caring for a patient during the immediate post-cardiac arrest period.



Figure 9-1 | Expert care during the immediate post-cardiac arrest period can improve outcomes for the post-cardiac arrest patient.

## Assess and Recognize

Clinical indications of ROSC include a palpable central pulse, a measurable blood pressure, a sudden and sustained increase in  $\text{ETCO}_2$ , an arterial pulse waveform on an arterial line when no compressions are being delivered and additional signs, such as patient movement, breathing or coughing. Upon recognizing ROSC, the team assesses and supports the patient's airway, breathing and circulation; assesses the patient's level of consciousness and institutes neuroprotective interventions.

## Care

Interventions during the immediate post-cardiac arrest period focus on ensuring optimal ventilation and oxygenation, managing hemodynamics, providing cardiac interventions and support as necessary, promoting neurologic recovery and addressing underlying causes (Figure 9-2).

### Initial Stabilization

#### Optimizing Ventilation and Oxygenation

If not already done, place an endotracheal tube. If an endotracheal tube is already in place, confirm proper position and patency. Start ventilations at a rate of 10 breaths per minute and adjust as necessary to keep carbon dioxide levels in physiologic range ( $\text{PaCO}_2$  between 35 and 45 mmHg or monitored using  $\text{ETCO}_2$ ), unless another target is clinically indicated. Provide 100% oxygen ( $\text{FiO}_2 1.0$ ) until the oxygen saturation can

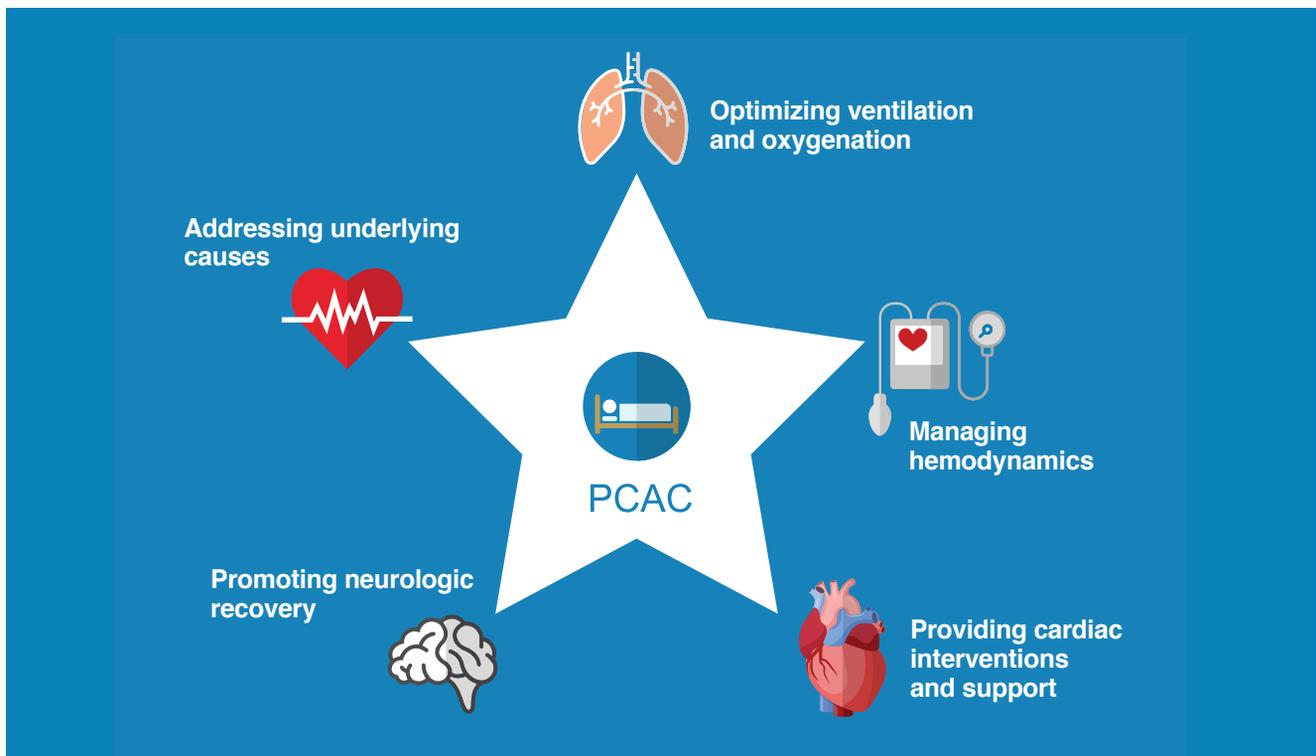


Figure 9-2 | During the immediate post–cardiac arrest period, interventions are focused on ensuring optimal ventilation and oxygenation, managing hemodynamics, addressing underlying causes, providing cardiac interventions and support and promoting neurologic recovery.

be measured, an arterial blood gas is obtained or both, and then provide the minimal level of oxygen needed to maintain an oxygen saturation ( $\text{SaO}_2$ ) of 94% to 99% and (if obtained) a  $\text{PaO}_2$  in the physiologic range. Continuously monitor the patient using capnography and pulse oximetry and, as available,  $\text{PaCO}_2$  and  $\text{PaO}_2$  to ensure ventilation and oxygenation levels are in the physiologic range.

### Managing Hemodynamics

To ensure the best outcome, perfusion must be adequate and maintained. Blood pressure can be extremely labile during the post–cardiac arrest period. As such hypotension should be treated aggressively. Current recommendations are to target a minimum systolic blood pressure of 90 mmHg or a mean arterial pressure (MAP) of 65 mmHg. Initially treat hypotension with a 1- to 2-L intravenous (IV) isotonic crystalloid fluid bolus. If the patient fails to respond to fluid, consider starting an IV vasopressor infusion (Table 9-1). The choice of agent is based on the clinical situation. Once therapy is initiated, the drug infusion rate can be titrated according to hemodynamic parameters and physical examination findings.

### Ongoing Management

Obtain a 12-lead ECG expediently. As time and resources permit, obtain a medical history and complete focused physical and neurologic examinations. Maintain euglycemia and identify treatable underlying causes (including Hs and Ts). Diagnostic studies aid in determining the pathophysiologic consequences of cardiac arrest, identifying the underlying cause and monitoring the patient's response to interventions (Table 9-2).

### Providing Cardiac Interventions and Support

Addressing ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) and non–ST-segment elevation acute coronary syndromes (NSTEMI-ACS) and providing mechanical cardiac support if needed may improve neurological outcomes. Consider the need for emergent cardiac interventions such as reperfusion therapy

Table 9-1 | Vasopressor Infusion for the Post–Cardiac Arrest Patient

Vasopressor	Dosage
Epinephrine	2 to 10 mcg/min IV/IO
Norepinephrine	0.1 to 0.5 mcg/kg/min IV/IO
Dopamine	5 to 20 mcg/kg/min IV/IO

Table 9-2 | Diagnostic Tests That May Be Ordered in the Evaluation of the Post-Cardiac Arrest Patient

Diagnostic Test	Purpose
Comprehensive metabolic panel	Detecting metabolic and electrolyte derangements and assessing acute renal injury
Serial lactate	Monitoring perfusion status (decreasing lactate levels suggest improved perfusion)
Serum glucose	Detecting hyperglycemia (associated with poor neurological outcomes) and hypoglycemia
Arterial blood gases	Monitoring for acidosis, hypoxia and hypercapnia; tailoring ventilation and oxygenation
Serum cardiac markers	Detecting myocardial infarction
12-lead ECG	Detecting myocardial infarction, arrhythmias
Chest radiograph	Verifying placement of endotracheal tube; detecting underlying causes of cardiac arrest
Ultrasonography	Detecting underlying causes of cardiac arrest
Echocardiography	Evaluating myocardial stunning and cardiac functioning; detecting ventricular wall abnormalities (suggestive of focal ischemia) and structural abnormalities
Coronary angiography	Evaluating coronary artery disease; diagnosing coronary thrombosis; performing percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI)
Brain imaging	Assessing brain injury and prognosis
Continuous EEG monitoring	Identifying seizures and epileptiform activity

and mechanical circulatory support and obtain a cardiology consultation. Patients with STEMI require immediate reperfusion therapy with percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), fibrinolytic therapy or both. Emergency coronary angiography is recommended for all patients, awake or comatose, who have ECG and laboratory findings suggestive of acute myocardial infarction. Both reperfusion therapy and mechanical circulatory support can be initiated in patients who are comatose and concurrently with targeted temperature management (TTM).

### Promoting Neurologic Recovery

**Targeted temperature management (TTM)** should be considered for all patients who remain comatose after ROSC, as indicated by an inability to follow verbal commands. TTM may reduce global oxygen demand and improve overall outcomes after cardiac arrest.

In TTM, a target temperature between 32° C (89.6° F) and 36° C (96.8° F) is established, the patient's body temperature is maintained at the targeted temperature for at least 24 hours, and then the patient's body temperature is slowly brought back up at a rate of 0.25° C per hour. Patient-specific factors should be

considered when determining the target temperature; for example, a temperature at the lower end of the range may be preferred for patients with seizures or cerebral edema. Various methods of inducing hypothermia may be used, including administering an ice-cold IV fluid bolus (30 mL/kg), using endovascular catheters or employing surface cooling strategies (e.g., cooling blankets, ice packs). The patient's core body temperature should be continuously monitored throughout therapy using an esophageal, rectal or bladder core temperature monitoring device.



### Practice Note

Providers should not initiate TTM in the prehospital setting.

Other measures for promoting neurologic recovery in patients who remain comatose following cardiac arrest include obtaining brain imaging and establishing continuous EEG monitoring to help identify seizures that might not be detected by other clinical parameters. Seizures or epileptiform activity on EEG occur in approximately 20% to 30% of comatose patients in

the post–cardiac arrest period. If detected, post–cardiac arrest seizures must be treated; however, anticonvulsants should not be used prophylactically during the post–cardiac arrest period.

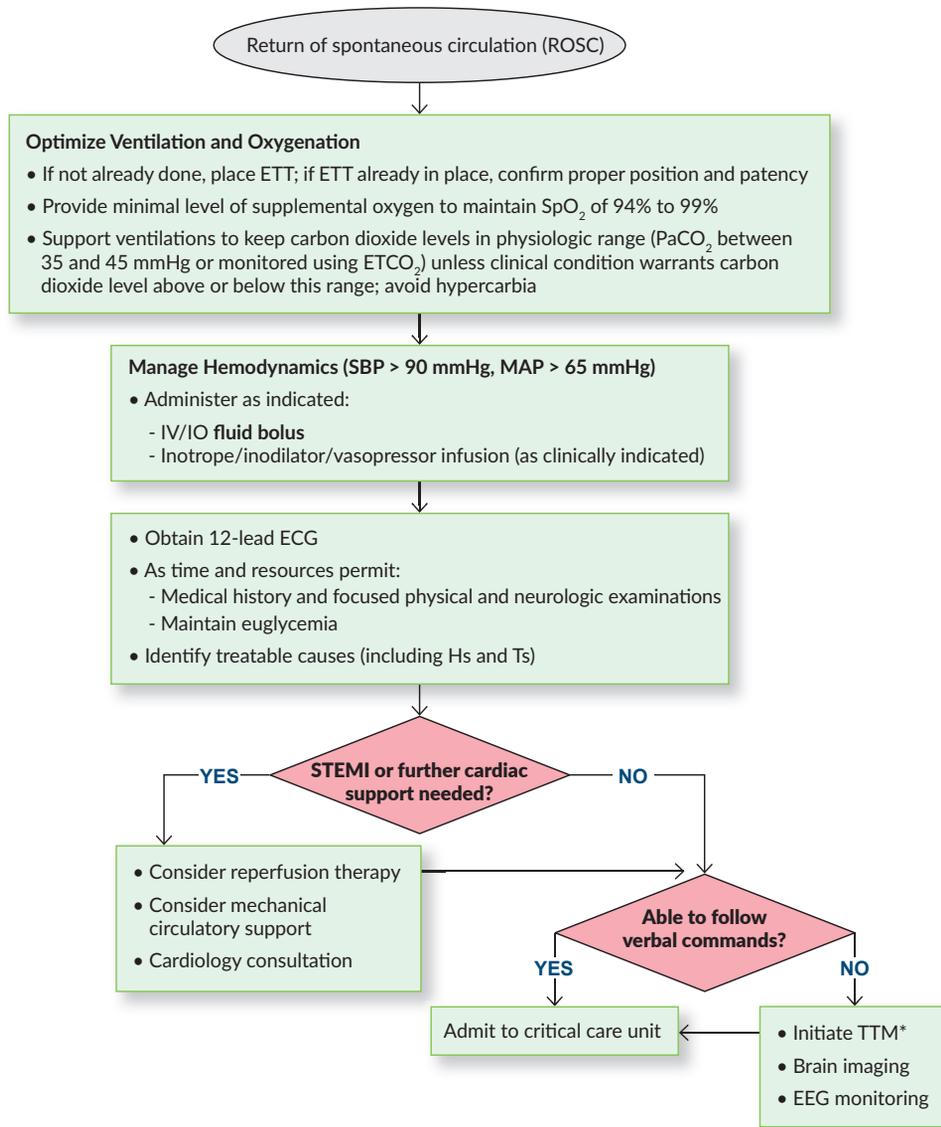
## Post—Cardiac Arrest Prognostication

Accurate neuroprognostication in patients who remain comatose after cardiac arrest is essential for decision-making related to the continuation or withdrawal of life-sustaining treatments. Because results of many of the assessments used for neuroprognostication can be affected by medications (e.g., sedation, analgesia), temperature, organ dysfunction or a combination of these factors, neuroprognostication should be multimodal and delayed until 72 hours after ROSC and following return to normothermia (although individual assessments that may not be affected by these factors may be completed prior to this).

A multimodal approach to predicting neurologic outcome is recommended and includes clinical examination, imaging, biomarkers and electrophysiology (see the *Adult Post–Cardiac Arrest Care Code Card*). Clinical examination findings that may be used to predict outcome include pupillary light reflex, quantitative pupillometry and corneal reflex (at 72 hours or later after ROSC) and myoclonus or status myoclonus (within 96 hours of ROSC). Imaging studies used for neuroprognostication in the post–cardiac arrest patient include brain computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). The biomarker neuron-specific endolase (NSE) may be evaluated within 72 hours of ROSC but should be considered in conjunction with other tests as part of a multimodal approach to neuroprognostication. Electroencephalography (EEG) and somatosensory evoked potential (SSEP) may also be considered as part of a multimodal approach to predicting neurological outcome. Neither background reactivity alone nor seizures on EEG or status epilepticus should be used to predict poor outcome.

# ADULT POST-CARDIAC ARREST CARE

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Medications	Ventilation and Oxygenation Goals	Hs and Ts	Targeted Temperature Management*
<b>IV/IO fluid bolus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 to 2 L NS or LR solution</li> </ul>	<b>Ventilation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start at 10 breaths/min; adjust as needed</li> <li>PaCO<sub>2</sub>: 35 to 45 mmHg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hypovolemia</li> <li>Hypoxemia</li> <li>Hydrogen ion excess (acidosis)</li> <li>Hyperkalemia/hypokalemia</li> <li>Hypothermia</li> <li>Hyperglycemia/hypoglycemia</li> <li>Tamponade (cardiac)</li> <li>Tension pneumothorax</li> <li>Thrombosis (pulmonary embolism)</li> <li>Thrombosis (myocardial infarction)</li> <li>Toxins</li> </ul>	Maintain core body temperature 32° C to 36° C for at least 24 hours  <b>Methods include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ice-cold IV fluid bolus (30 mL/kg)</li> <li>Endovascular catheters</li> <li>Surface-cooling strategies (e.g., cooling blankets, ice packs)</li> </ul>
<b>Dopamine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 to 20 mcg/kg/min IV/IO</li> </ul>			
<b>Epinephrine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 to 10 mcg/min IV/IO</li> </ul>	<b>Oxygenation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide minimal level needed to maintain SpO<sub>2</sub> of 94% to 99%</li> </ul>	Continuously monitor core temperature via esophageal, rectal or bladder catheter  Monitor for negative consequences of hypothermic temperature	
<b>Norepinephrine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.1 to 0.5 mcg/kg/min IV/IO</li> </ul>			

\*Providers should not initiate TTM in the prehospital setting. The evidence for TTM is constantly evolving. Defer to institutional protocols and clinician judgment based on the latest evidence.



# ADULT POST-CARDIAC ARREST CARE

ALS - 2020 VERSION

Prognostication Following Return of Spontaneous Circulation (ROSC)		
Clinical management	TTM (if indicated)	0 to 30 hours post-ROSC
	Rewarming (if indicated)	30 to 54 hours post-ROSC
	Minimize sedation and analgesia as possible; controlled normothermia	54 to 72+ hours post-ROSC
Multimodal prognostication in the post-cardiac arrest period should not be determined before 72 hours after ROSC and following return to normothermia.		
Modality	Predictor	Timeframe Post-ROSC
Imaging	Brain computed tomography (CT) • Gray-to-white matter ratio (GWR)	0 to 24 hours
	Brain diffusion-weighted MRI (DWMRI) • Apparent diffusion coefficient (ADC)	24 to 72+ hours
Electrophysiology	Somatosensory evoked potentials (SSEPs) • Bilaterally absent N20 SSEPs	24 to 72+ hours
	Electroencephalography (EEG) • Seizure activity • Burst suppression	72+ hours
Clinical examination	Myoclonus or status myoclonus*	24 to 72 hours
	Pupillary light reflexes	72+ hours
	Quantitative pupillometry	72+ hours
	Corneal reflexes	72+ hours
Serum biomarkers	Serum neuron-specific enolase (NSE)	24 to 72 hours

\* Obtain EEG with myoclonic jerks.





# Acute Coronary Syndromes

## Introduction

**Acute coronary syndromes (ACS)** is a general term for a group of life-threatening conditions that occur because of a sudden reduction in blood flow to the heart. Each year in the United States, an estimated 660,000 people require hospitalization for myocardial infarction related to coronary artery disease. Quickly identifying and triaging patients with ACS is critical because ACS carries a significantly increased risk of death and complications associated with myocardial ischemia.

## Classification of Acute Coronary Syndromes

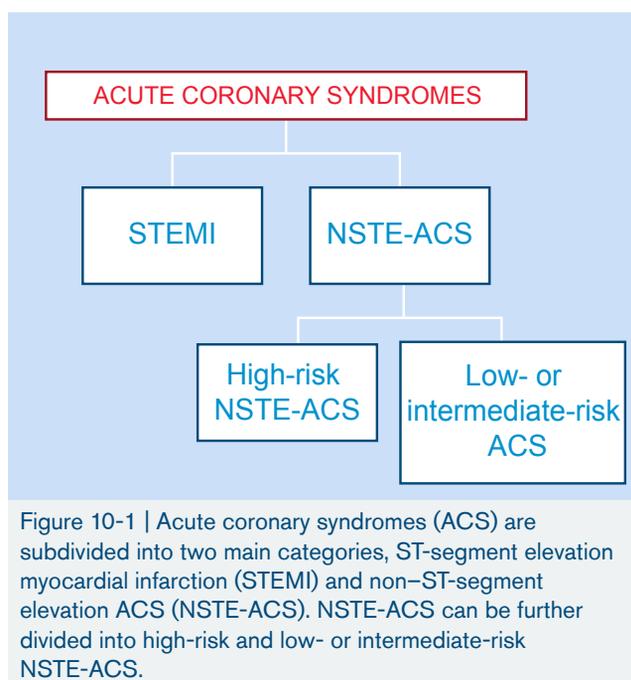
Based on 12-lead ECG findings, the ischemic conditions that comprise ACS can be subdivided into two categories (Figure 10-1):

- STEMI, or ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction, which is characterized by new ST-segment elevation that suggests myocardial infarction.
- NSTEMI-ACS, or non-ST-segment elevation ACS, which can be further classified as high-risk and low- or intermediate-risk. Patients with ECG findings highly suspicious for ischemia, a high risk score on a risk-stratification tool or both are considered to have high-risk NSTEMI-ACS. Patients with a normal or nondiagnostic ECG or a low risk score on a risk-stratification tool are considered to have low- or intermediate-risk NSTEMI-ACS.

## Goals for Management

When ACS is determined to be the cause of a patient's chest pain or discomfort, the goals for management are to:

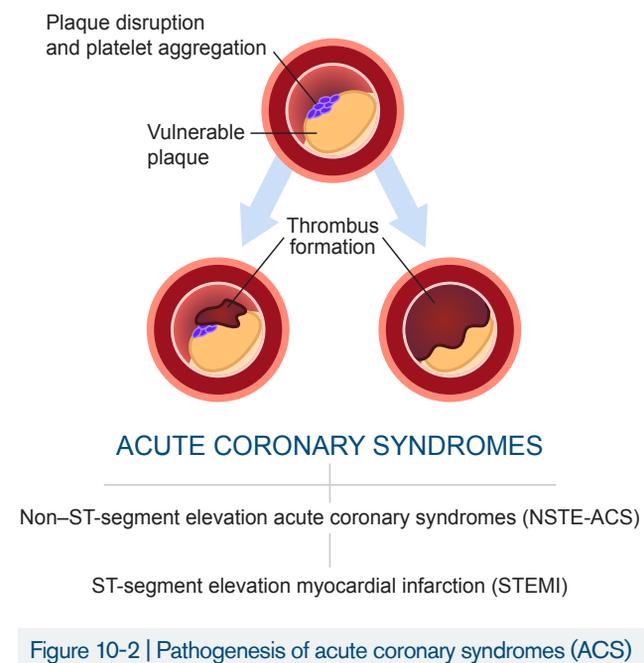
- Identify those patients with STEMI and determine candidacy for early reperfusion therapy with either **percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI)** or **fibrinolytic therapy**.
- Relieve ischemic chest pain and discomfort.
- Manage complications, such as ischemia-induced arrhythmias that can lead to cardiac arrest and death.



- Determine and manage risk for major adverse cardiac events, including death, new or recurrent myocardial infarction or severe recurrent ischemia requiring urgent revascularization.

## Pathophysiology of Acute Coronary Syndromes

The underlying cause of ACS is a sudden reduction in the blood supply to the myocardium. In most cases, the precipitating cause of the reduced blood supply is rupture of a vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque. Disruption of the lipid-laden plaque results in transient platelet aggregation and the release of vasoactive substances from the diseased endothelium, causing vasospasm, plaque erosion and eventually the development of an occlusive intracoronary thrombus. The thrombus and associated inflammatory changes lead to partial or complete occlusion of the coronary artery, producing a spectrum of ACS (Figure 10-2). In about 70% of patients who present with ACS each year, arterial occlusion results in myocardial ischemia without persistent ST-segment elevation (NSTEMI-ACS). In the other approximately 30% of patients who present with ACS, arterial occlusion results in STEMI.



## STEMI Chain of Survival

The STEMI Chain of Survival illustrates how a coordinated effort among members of the community, prehospital providers and in-hospital providers can increase the patient's likelihood of surviving STEMI (Figure 10-3).

### Early Recognition and Activation of the Emergency Response System

Early recognition of signs and symptoms along with activation of emergency medical services (EMS) is the first link in the STEMI Chain of Survival.

### Rapid Dispatch, Rapid Transport and Prearrival Notification

The second link in the STEMI Chain of Survival entails rapid dispatch of EMS professionals to the patient's location, rapid transport of the patient to a facility capable of administering reperfusion therapies and notification of the receiving facility in advance of the patient's arrival. During this stage, prehospital providers initiate diagnostic and therapeutic measures, such as obtaining a 12-lead ECG, administering oxygen and medications and completing a fibrinolytic checklist.

### Rapid In-Hospital Assessment and Diagnosis

After the patient arrives at the receiving facility, providers work to obtain a definitive diagnosis and initiate appropriate care.

### Rapid Treatment

Reperfusion therapy in the form of PCI or fibrinolytic therapy is recommended for all patients with STEMI who present within 12 hours of symptom onset.

- **PCI.** When the receiving facility is equipped to perform PCI, the procedure should be performed within 90 minutes of the patient's first medical contact. If transfer to a facility that is capable of performing PCI is necessary, PCI should be performed within 120 minutes of the patient's first medical contact. As the time from first medical contact to PCI increases, so does the mortality rate.
- **Fibrinolytic therapy.** When reperfusion will be achieved through fibrinolysis, infusion of fibrinolytic agents should be initiated within 30 minutes of the patient's arrival.

## Recognizing Acute Coronary Syndromes

Signs and symptoms of ischemia, especially in a patient with risk factors for coronary artery disease, should raise suspicion for ACS. The patient's clinical presentation and results from diagnostic tests (including the 12-lead ECG and serum cardiac marker testing) aid in

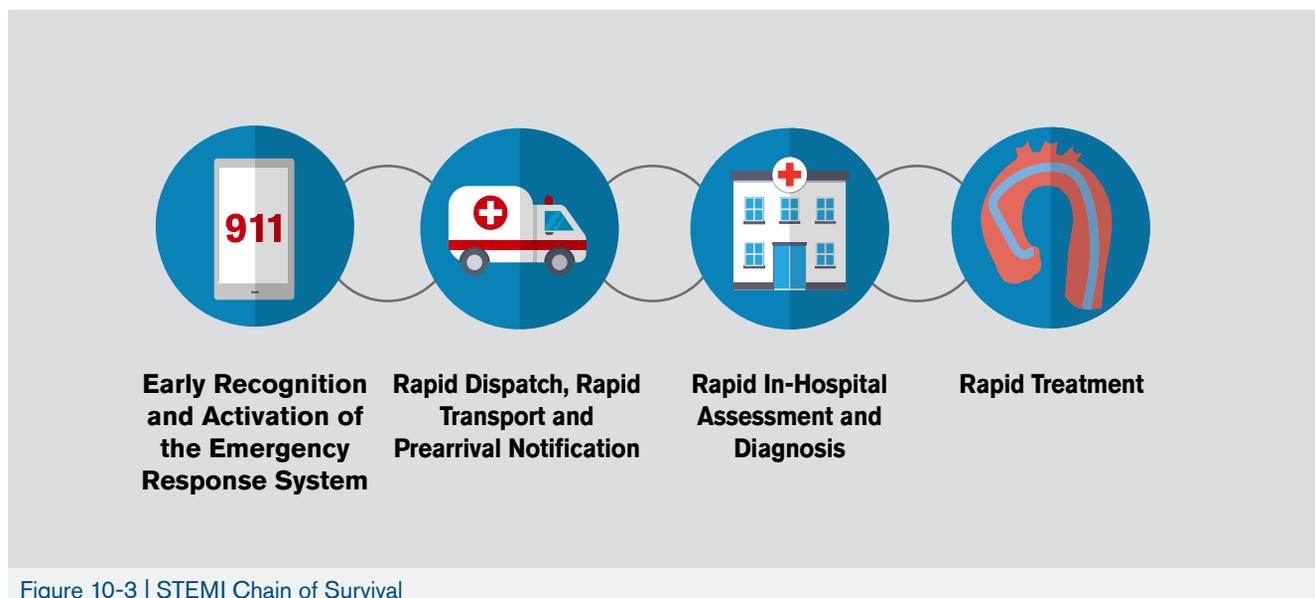


Figure 10-3 | STEMI Chain of Survival

diagnosing ACS, assessing the patient's risk for major adverse cardiac events and determining a management strategy.

## Clinical Presentation

ACS should initially be considered in all patients who present with chest pain or discomfort or other signs or symptoms of ischemia or infarction (Figure 10-4). Patients may report retrosternal pressure, squeezing, tightness, aching or heaviness that may radiate to one or both arms or shoulders, the back, the neck, the jaw or the epigastric region. The pain or discomfort is persistent, lasting longer than 3 to 5 minutes, and may be intermittent.

The pain or discomfort may or may not be accompanied by other symptoms, including:

- Dizziness, light-headedness or syncope.
- Sudden, unexplained dyspnea, which may occur in the absence of chest pain or discomfort.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Pale, ashen or slightly cyanotic skin, especially on the face and fingers.
- Diaphoresis.
- Anxiety or a feeling of impending doom.
- Extreme fatigue.
- Loss of consciousness.

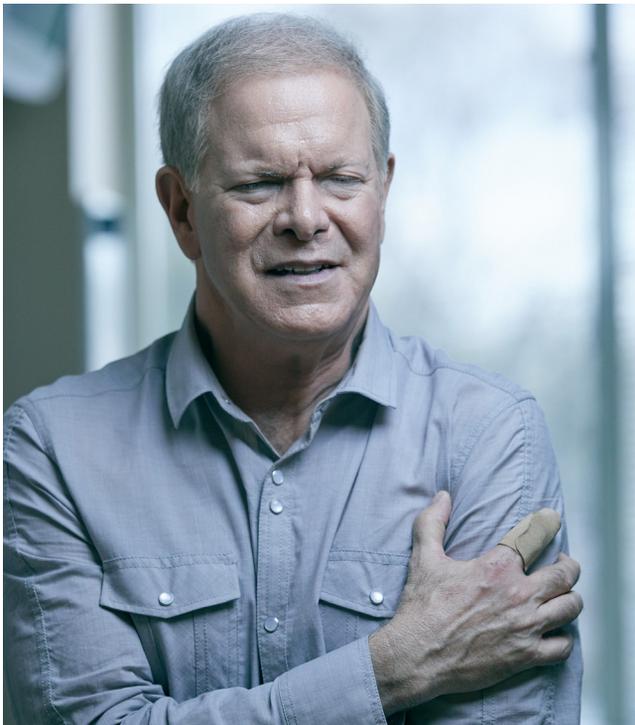


Figure 10-4 | Pain or discomfort is a common symptom associated with ACS.

Women, patients younger than 40 years or older than 75 years, and those with medical conditions such as diabetes may present with atypical symptoms of ischemia or infarction. For example, patients with diabetes may experience ischemia without pain ("silent ischemia").

## ECG Findings

A 12-lead ECG is an essential component of the evaluation of a patient presenting with chest pain (Figure 10-5). ECG findings can support a diagnosis of ACS. In addition, in patients thought to have ACS, ECG findings can be used to assign patients to one of three clinical categories, which in turn helps to determine risk and guide treatment decisions. For the purposes of recognizing ACS, ECG changes must be noted in two or more contiguous leads. Normal or nonspecific ECG findings do not rule out the possibility of ACS. For this reason, ECG findings must always be evaluated in the context of the patient's overall clinical presentation.

- **STEMI.** New ST-segment elevation at the J point in leads  $V_2$  and  $V_3$  of at least 0.2 mV ( $\geq 2$  mm) in men older than 40 years, 0.25 mV ( $\geq 2.5$  mm) in men 40 years or younger or 0.15 mV ( $\geq 1.5$  mm) in women is considered diagnostic of STEMI. Alternatively, new ST-segment elevation of at least 0.1 mV ( $\geq 1$  mm) in two or more contiguous leads other than  $V_2$  and  $V_3$  is diagnostic for STEMI, as is new or presumed new left bundle branch block (LBBB). ST-segment depression in reciprocal leads is a common feature of STEMI and in some studies has been associated with a worse prognosis.



Figure 10-5 | ECG findings can support a diagnosis of ACS and assist in guiding treatment decisions.

- **High-risk NSTEMI-ACS.** Patients with high-risk NSTEMI-ACS show changes suggestive of ischemia, such as ST-segment depression or T-wave inversion, in two or more contiguous leads. Transient ST-segment elevation, defined as ST-segment elevation of at least 0.05 mV ( $\geq 0.5$  mm) that lasts for less than 20 minutes, may also be seen in patients with high-risk NSTEMI-ACS.
- **Low- or intermediate-risk NSTEMI-ACS.** Patients with low- or intermediate-risk NSTEMI-ACS show nondiagnostic ST-segment or T-wave changes on ECG, or no changes at all. ST-segment deviation less than 0.05 mV (0.5 mm) in either direction or T-wave inversion of 0.2 mV (2 mm) or less may be seen on ECG. These patients require additional risk stratification supported by the results of other diagnostic tests, such as serum cardiac marker testing and functional testing.

## Serum Cardiac Markers

Levels of serum cardiac markers should be assessed in all cases of suspected ACS. Cardiac troponin T (cTnT) and cardiac troponin I (cTnI) biomarkers are preferred for diagnosing myocardial injury. For diagnosis, it is important to assess both the peak troponin level and changes in troponin level over time, so cardiac troponin levels should be measured at initial presentation and then 3 to 6 hours later. For high-sensitivity markers, some protocols suggest measurement at initial presentation and then 2 hours later. In patients who present with normal troponin levels initially but who show ECG changes suggestive of intermediate- or high-risk NSTEMI-ACS, an additional cardiac troponin measurement beyond 6 hours may be indicated. In addition to being prognostic (for both short- and long-term outcomes), cardiac troponin levels in combination with risk stratification are useful to guide treatment decisions.

## Patient Assessment

Chest pain or discomfort results in approximately 7 million emergency department visits each year. Among these patients, approximately 1.6 million are admitted with a diagnosis of ACS. To expedite appropriate therapy for all patients presenting with chest pain or discomfort, providers must be able to rapidly discern the underlying cause.

## Rapid Assessment

On initial impression, some patients with ACS appear acutely ill (e.g., anxious, pale, diaphoretic, dyspneic, in pain). However, others may appear to be in minimal distress or show only subtle signs of discomfort, such as rubbing the upper arm or chest.

## Primary Assessment

Conduct a primary assessment following the ABCDE approach and provide initial interventions as needed. Establish cardiac monitoring, pulse oximetry and vascular access, and be prepared to provide CPR and defibrillation if the patient's condition deteriorates. If the oxygen saturation is less than 90%, provide the minimal level of supplemental oxygen needed to maintain an oxygen saturation greater than 90% but less than or equal to 99%. Avoid hyperoxia. Obtain a 12-lead ECG expeditiously.

## Secondary Assessment

The goals of the secondary assessment are to gather more historical and physical information to further differentiate ACS from other causes of acute chest pain (Box 10-1) as needed, and to gather data for risk stratification. Risk-stratification tools such as the HEART (History, ECG, Age, Risk factors, initial Troponin) score (Figure 10-6), Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction (TIMI) score and Global Registry of Acute Coronary Events (GRACE) score assign weights to various predictive factors to calculate the patient's risk for experiencing a major adverse cardiac event in the next 1 to 6 months.

## History

Key information to elicit during the history includes:

- A full description of the chest pain or discomfort, including provoking and alleviating factors, qualities, where it is located, its onset and duration, its severity and any associated symptoms.

### Box 10-1 | Life-Threatening Causes of Acute Chest Pain

- Aortic dissection
- Pulmonary embolism
- Pneumothorax
- Ruptured esophagus
- Perforating peptic ulcer disease

HEART SCORE FOR CHEST PAIN			
History	Highly suspicious	2	
	Moderately suspicious	1	
	Slightly or nonsuspicious	0	
ECG	Significant ST-segment depression	2	
	Nonspecific repolarization	1	
	Normal	0	
Age	65 years or older	2	
	45 to 64 years	1	
	44 years or younger	0	
Risk Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Diabetes mellitus</li> <li>■ Hypercholesterolemia</li> <li>■ Hypertension</li> <li>■ Smoking</li> <li>■ Family history of coronary artery disease</li> <li>■ Obesity</li> </ul>	3 or more risk factors OR a history of coronary artery disease	2	
	1 or 2 risk factors	1	
	0 known risk factors	0	
Troponin	> 3x normal limit	2	
	1–3x normal limit	1	
	≤ normal limit	0	
		<b>Total:</b>	

Figure 10-6 | Risk stratification tools, such as the HEART score, assign weights to various predictive factors to calculate the patient's short-term risk for experiencing a major adverse cardiac event. Adapted with permission from Backus BE, Six AJ, Kelder JC, et al. A prospective validation of the HEART score for chest pain patients at the emergency department. *Int J Cardiol.* 2013;168(3):2154.

- Symptoms suggestive of heart failure or other complications of ischemia.
- The presence of risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
- Relevant events from the medical history, including a history of cardiovascular or cerebrovascular disease.
- Contraindications to fibrinolysis.

### Physical Examination

Physical examination may reveal signs that aid in the differential diagnosis or that assist in identifying the hemodynamic consequences of ischemia. Findings may include signs of left ventricular dysfunction (e.g., hypotension, crackles, weak peripheral pulses) or cardiogenic shock (e.g., cool, clammy skin). Other significant findings may include jugular venous distension, a third or fourth heart sound or murmurs. In some patients with ACS, the physical examination does not reveal anything of significance.

### Diagnostic Tests

ACS cannot be diagnosed on the basis of history and physical examination findings alone. Tests that are routinely ordered in the assessment of a patient with possible ACS include a 12-lead ECG, serum cardiac markers, a serum electrolyte panel and coagulation studies. A chest radiograph is typically obtained at presentation to rule out other causes of acute chest pain and to identify pulmonary congestion (a negative prognostic factor in patients with ACS).

### Approach to the Patient

Prompt evaluation and intervention for all patients with suspected ACS is critical to limit ischemic damage to the myocardium and prevent death. The *Adult Acute Coronary Syndromes Code Card* summarizes the approach to a patient with ACS.

## Assess and Recognize

When ACS is suspected, the team takes actions to ensure adequate airway, breathing and circulation, including establishing cardiac monitoring and pulse oximetry, administering supplemental oxygen if needed and ensuring vascular access.

Additionally, the team works to gather information that will aid in definitive diagnosis, risk stratification and treatment decisions. Actions include:

- Obtaining a 12-lead ECG within 10 minutes of the patient's arrival at the facility.
- Ordering serum cardiac marker, complete blood count, electrolyte and coagulation studies within 10 minutes of the patient's arrival at the facility.
- Obtaining a brief medical history and conducting a focused physical examination.
- Reviewing or completing the fibrinolytic checklist.
- Obtaining a chest radiograph within 30 minutes of the patient's arrival at the facility (without delaying cardiac interventions).



### Practice Note

For patients with suspected STEMI, do not delay activation of the PCI team or initiation of fibrinolytic therapy while awaiting the results of serum cardiac marker or radiographic studies.

Initiate general drug therapy for patients with signs and symptoms of ischemia or infarction as soon as possible after screening for contraindications.

- **Aspirin.** If not already administered by prehospital providers, administer antiplatelet therapy in the form of aspirin (162 to 325 mg) to patients without contraindications (such as aspirin allergy or a history of gastrointestinal bleeding). The patient should be instructed to chew the aspirin.



### Practice Note

Except for aspirin, use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents (NSAIDs) is contraindicated for patients with STEMI.

- **Nitroglycerin.** Administer nitroglycerin (0.4 or 0.8 mg every 5 minutes by sublingual tablet or spray, up to three doses) to relieve ischemic chest pain, unless contraindicated. If the pain persists, consider intravenous nitroglycerin.



### Practice Note

Nitroglycerin must be used with caution or not at all in certain situations. Conditions that may preclude the use of nitroglycerin include inferior wall myocardial infarction with right ventricular involvement, hypotension (systolic blood pressure < 90 mmHg), significant bradycardia (heart rate < 50 bpm), tachycardia and use of phosphodiesterase inhibitors within the previous 24 to 48 hours. Nitroglycerin is a vasodilator and its administration under these conditions may prevent the patient from maintaining adequate cardiac output and blood pressure.

- **Morphine.** Consider morphine (1 to 5 mg) for patients who continue to experience chest pain despite antianginal therapy.



### Practice Note

Morphine should not be administered to hypotensive patients or those with right ventricular infarction. Additionally, morphine should be used with caution in patients with NSTEMI-ACS because its use in these patients has been associated with increased mortality.

## Care

Assigning the patient to a clinical category (STEMI, high-risk NSTEMI-ACS or low- or intermediate-risk NSTEMI-ACS) helps to guide management decisions.

### STEMI

Treatment for STEMI depends on how much time has passed since symptom onset. Patients who present within 12 hours of symptom onset should receive early reperfusion therapy (PCI or fibrinolysis) and adjuvant drug therapy. Those who present more than 12 hours after symptom onset and are found to be at high risk for experiencing a major adverse cardiac event in the next 1 to 6 months may benefit from an early invasive strategy (e.g., coronary angiography with or without revascularization within 24 hours of admission).

### Reperfusion Therapy

Reperfusion therapy is the standard of care for all patients with STEMI who are diagnosed within 12 hours of symptom onset and who have no contraindications.

PCI is performed in a cardiac catheterization suite and entails balloon angioplasty, with or without stent

placement. When performed at a PCI-capable facility, **primary PCI** (i.e., PCI performed as first-line therapy for STEMI) is associated with better patient outcomes, compared with outcomes following fibrinolytic therapy. If primary PCI cannot be performed within 90 minutes of the patient's first medical contact, fibrinolysis should be provided within 30 minutes of the patient's arrival. Fibrin-specific agents (such as recombinant tissue plasminogen activator [rtPA], reteplase and tenecteplase) are preferred over non-fibrin-specific agents (such as streptokinase). Following fibrinolysis, angiography and PCI may be performed within 3 to 24 hours, if indicated.

### Adjuvant Drug Therapy

In addition to reperfusion therapy, anticoagulant and antiplatelet therapies are initiated to inhibit the formation or recurrence of intracoronary thrombi, and medications may be administered to support cardiac function (Box 10-2).

### High-Risk NSTEMI-ACS

An early invasive strategy should be considered for patients with NSTEMI-ACS who have elevated troponin levels or high risk-stratification scores. Indications for an

early invasive strategy include:

- Refractory ischemic chest discomfort.
- Recurrent or persistent ST-segment deviation.
- Ventricular tachycardia.
- Hemodynamic instability.
- Signs or symptoms of heart failure.

Dual antiplatelet therapy (aspirin and a P2Y<sub>12</sub> platelet receptor inhibitor) and anticoagulant therapy may also be considered. Provide adjuvant therapies and obtain a cardiology consultation.

### Low- or Intermediate-Risk NSTEMI-ACS

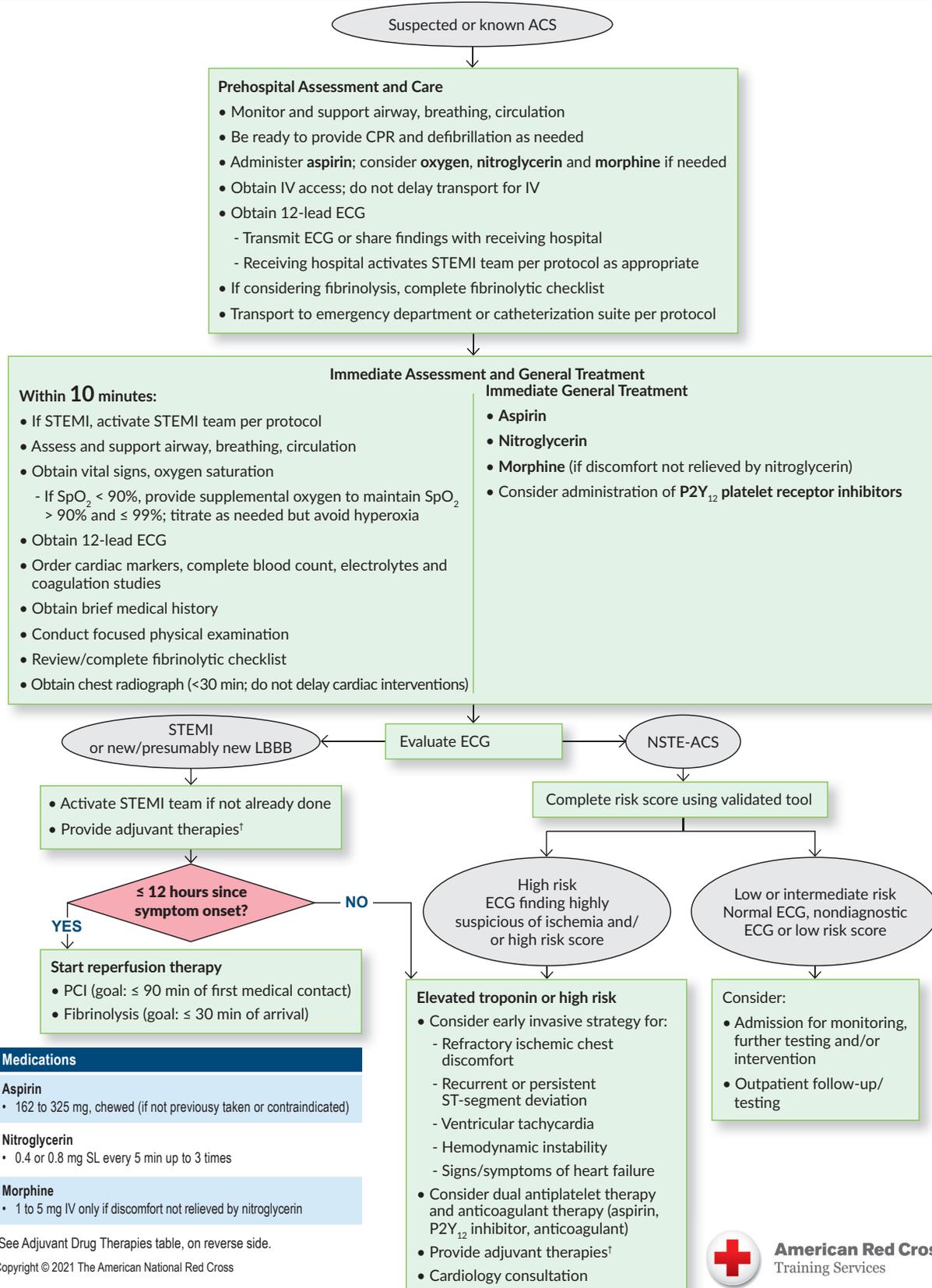
For patients with low- or intermediate-risk NSTEMI-ACS, consider admission to a chest pain unit or other monitored bed. The HEART score can be a useful adjunct to clinical judgment when deciding whether to admit or discharge a patient with suspected low- or intermediate-risk NSTEMI-ACS. For those patients who are admitted, monitor for the development of ischemia through the use of serial serum cardiac markers and repeat ECG or continuous ST-segment monitoring. Noninvasive imaging and functional testing may also be indicated. Patients with low- or intermediate-risk NSTEMI-ACS who are discharged should have outpatient follow-up and testing.

#### Box 10-2 | Adjuvant Drug Therapy

- **P2Y<sub>12</sub> platelet receptor inhibitors.** Two P2Y<sub>12</sub> platelet receptor inhibitors—clopidogrel and ticagrelor—are approved for use in combination with aspirin for PCI for high-risk patients, or for patients with aspirin allergy.
- **Glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitors.** Intravenous glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitors are recommended for patients allergic to or intolerant of P2Y<sub>12</sub> inhibitors, those who are undergoing PCI in combination with P2Y<sub>12</sub> inhibitors and are at high risk for thrombus formation, and those with aspirin allergy.
- **Anticoagulants.** Unfractionated heparin, enoxaparin or fondaparinux may be used for anticoagulation therapy following fibrinolytic therapy or PCI. Incorrect dosing or monitoring of heparin in patients with STEMI has been associated with intracerebral bleeding and hemorrhage.
- **Bivalirudin.** Bivalirudin is a direct thrombin inhibitor that may be used as an alternative to combination therapy with heparin and a glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitor for anticoagulation following PCI.
- **β-Blockers.** Treatment with β-blockers should be initiated within 24 hours of presentation unless there are contraindications (e.g., acute heart failure, low cardiac output, risk for cardiogenic shock).
- **Intravenous nitroglycerin.** In patients with STEMI, intravenous nitroglycerin may be used when chest pain or discomfort is recurrent or refractory to nitroglycerin administered sublingually or by spray. STEMI that is complicated by pulmonary edema or hypertension may also warrant the use of intravenous nitroglycerin. When used to relieve refractory chest discomfort, titrate to maintain a systolic blood pressure of 90 mmHg or more (or 30 mmHg below baseline in patients with hypertension). When used to improve pulmonary edema or hypertension, titrate to maintain a systolic blood pressure that is 10% less than the baseline pressure in patients with blood pressure in the normal range, and 30 mmHg below baseline in patients with hypertension.

# ADULT ACUTE CORONARY SYNDROMES

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**Medications**

**Aspirin**

- 162 to 325 mg, chewed (if not previously taken or contraindicated)

**Nitroglycerin**

- 0.4 or 0.8 mg SL every 5 min up to 3 times

**Morphine**

- 1 to 5 mg IV only if discomfort not relieved by nitroglycerin



# ADULT ACUTE CORONARY SYNDROMES

ALS - 2020 VERSION

ECG Findings in Acute Coronary Syndromes		
STEMI (ST-segment elevation or new or presumably new LBBB)	NSTE-ACS	
	High Risk (ST-segment depression, dynamic T-wave inversion or transient ST-segment elevation strongly suspicious of ischemia)	Intermediate or Low Risk (normal or nondiagnostic ST-segment or T-wave changes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New ST-segment elevation at the J point in leads V2 and V3 of:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>≥ 0.2 mV (≥ 2 mm) in men &gt; 40 years</li> <li>≥ 0.25 mV (≥ 2.5 mm) in men ≤ 40 years</li> <li>≥ 0.15 mV (≥ 1.5 mm) in women</li> </ul> </li> <li>New ST-segment elevation ≥ 0.1 mV (≥ 1 mm) in two or more contiguous leads other than V2 and V3</li> <li>New or presumed new left bundle branch block (LBBB)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes suggestive of ischemia, such as ST-segment depression or T-wave inversion, in two or more contiguous leads</li> <li>Transient ST-segment elevation ≥ 0.05 mV (≥ 0.5 mm) lasting &lt; 20 min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No ECG changes, or nondiagnostic ST-segment or T-wave changes</li> <li>ST-segment deviation &lt; 0.05 mV (0.5 mm) in either direction or T-wave inversion ≤ 0.2 mV (2 mm)</li> </ul>

Normal or nonspecific ECG findings do not rule out the possibility of acute coronary syndromes. Always evaluate ECG findings in the context of the patient's overall clinical presentation.

Clinical Presentation of Acute Coronary Syndromes	
<p>Consider in all patients presenting with chest pain or discomfort:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retrosternal pressure, squeezing, tightness, aching or heaviness</li> <li>May radiate to one or both arms or shoulders, the back, neck, jaw or epigastric region</li> <li>Persistent (more than 3 to 5 min); may be intermittent</li> </ul>	<p>Other possible signs and symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dizziness, light-headedness or syncope</li> <li>Sudden, unexplained dyspnea, which may occur without chest pain or discomfort</li> <li>Nausea or vomiting</li> <li>Pale, ashen or slightly cyanotic skin, especially on the face and fingers</li> <li>Diaphoresis</li> <li>Anxiety or a feeling of impending doom</li> <li>Extreme fatigue</li> <li>Loss of consciousness</li> </ul>
<p>Note: Women, patients &lt; 40 years or &gt; 75 years, and those with medical conditions may present with atypical symptoms of ischemia (e.g., patients with diabetes may experience ischemia without pain, or "silent ischemia").</p>	

Adjuvant Drug Therapies	
Drug Class	Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P2Y<sub>12</sub> platelet receptor inhibitors                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clopidogrel</li> <li>Ticagrelor</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	For use in combination with aspirin for PCI for high-risk patients, or for patients with aspirin allergy
Glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitors	For patients allergic or intolerant of P2Y <sub>12</sub> inhibitors, or undergoing PCI in combination with P2Y <sub>12</sub> inhibitors and high risk for thrombus, and for aspirin allergy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticoagulants                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unfractionated heparin</li> <li>Enoxaparin</li> <li>Fondaparinux</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	For anticoagulation therapy following fibrinolytic therapy or PCI
Bivalirudin	An alternative to combination therapy with heparin and a glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitor for anticoagulation after PCI
β-Blockers	Initiate within the first 24 hours unless there are contraindications (e.g., acute heart failure, low cardiac output)
Intravenous nitroglycerin	For recurrent or refractory chest pain, pulmonary edema or hypertension accompanying STEMI



# Stroke

## Introduction

Among American adults, stroke is the fifth-leading cause of death and is a leading cause of long-term disability. Each year approximately 795,000 Americans have a stroke, which equates to about one stroke occurring every 40 seconds. Among people experiencing a stroke, one third will die, one third will have long-term disability and one third will recover with minimal or no disability. Early management of acute stroke is included in ALS training because, just as with cardiac emergencies, time is a critical component of treatment. Timely recognition, assessment and management of acute stroke can minimize brain injury and improve patient outcomes.

## Overview of Stroke

A stroke is a sudden neurologic deficit that occurs because of impaired blood flow to part of the brain. Stroke is characterized by:

- A sudden onset of signs and symptoms.
- Primary involvement of the central nervous system.
- An ischemic or hemorrhagic cause.

### Ischemic Stroke

**Ischemic stroke** occurs when a blood vessel carrying blood to the brain becomes obstructed. Ischemic strokes account for about 87% of all strokes. Ischemic stroke is classified as thrombotic or embolic.

- A **thrombotic stroke** is most often caused by rupture of an atherosclerotic plaque in a cerebral artery, resulting in the formation of a thrombus that occludes the artery. Patients frequently have a history of hypercholesterolemia and atherosclerosis. Large vessel thrombosis, which occurs in the larger arteries of the brain, is the most common form of thrombotic stroke and is associated with a poor prognosis. Lacunar infarction occurs when one of the small, deep penetrating arteries of the brain becomes obstructed and is associated with a more favorable prognosis.
- An **embolic stroke** occurs when a plaque fragment or blood clot forms elsewhere within the circulatory system and travels to the cerebral circulation. Often the source of the embolus is a blood clot that forms in the heart or the large arteries in the upper chest or neck. Between 15% and 20% of embolic strokes are associated with atrial fibrillation.

For acute ischemic stroke, the goal of treatment is to relieve the obstruction and restore blood flow to the brain tissue. Acute ischemic stroke can be treated with fibrinolytic therapy, endovascular therapy, or both, but the window for treatment is narrow.

- Fibrinolytic therapy is ideally administered within 60 minutes of the patient's arrival and within 3 hours of symptom onset, although this time frame may be extended to 4.5 hours for some patients.
- Endovascular therapy is ideally administered as soon as possible and within 6 hours of symptom onset, although this time frame may be extended to 24 hours for some patients.

## Hemorrhagic Stroke

**Hemorrhagic stroke** occurs when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures and pressure from the bleeding damages the brain tissue. This type of stroke is frequently caused by hypertension or aneurysms. Hemorrhagic strokes are less common than ischemic strokes, accounting for about 13% of all strokes, but are responsible for about 40% of all stroke-related deaths. Hemorrhagic strokes can be classified as intracerebral or subarachnoid.

- **Intracerebral hemorrhage**, the most common form of hemorrhagic stroke, occurs when an artery located within the brain bursts, causing bleeding into the surrounding brain tissue. Causes of intracerebral hemorrhage include **arteriovenous malformation**, anticoagulant therapy and chronic hypertension.
- **Subarachnoid hemorrhage** occurs when a blood vessel located on the surface of the brain ruptures, causing bleeding into the subarachnoid space. This type of hemorrhage is most often caused by a ruptured aneurysm but can also be caused by an arteriovenous malformation, bleeding disorder, head injury or anticoagulant therapy.

## Acute Stroke Chain of Survival

The Acute Stroke Chain of Survival (Figure 11-1) illustrates how a coordinated effort among members of the community, out-of-hospital providers and in-hospital providers can optimize outcomes for patients with stroke.

### Early Recognition and Activation of the Emergency Response System

Because treatment of acute ischemic stroke is time dependent, early recognition of signs and symptoms of stroke and activation of emergency medical services (EMS) is key.

### Rapid Dispatch and Stroke Protocol Activation

The second link in the Acute Stroke Chain of Survival is rapid dispatch and stroke protocol activation. The EMS dispatcher should handle all potential stroke calls as critical. Assistance should be dispatched to these patients with the highest level of priority.

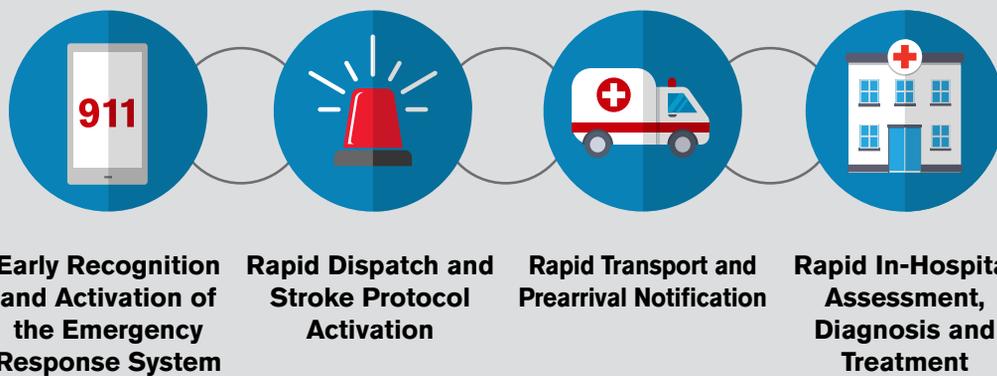


Figure 11-1 | Acute Stroke Chain of Survival

## Rapid Transport and Prearrival Notification

Rapid transport and prearrival notification is the third link in the Acute Stroke Chain of Survival. The goal is to efficiently transport the patient to a facility where definitive assessment and treatment can take place, and to ensure that appropriate personnel and resources are assembled in anticipation of the patient's arrival. The receiving facility should be capable of administering reperfusion therapies and providing post-stroke care on a dedicated stroke unit (Box 11-1).

### Practice Note

Patients with potential acute ischemic stroke who present to a facility that is not equipped to provide fibrinolytic or endovascular therapy should be treated according to the facility's highest level of care or scope of practice, stabilized as much as possible and then transported to the closest facility with stroke treatment capabilities.

## Rapid In-Hospital Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment

The final link of the Acute Stroke Chain of Survival is rapid in-hospital assessment, diagnosis and treatment. Time frames have been established for these activities to take place for a patient with acute ischemic stroke (Figure 11-2).

- Within 10 minutes of the patient's arrival, the team supports airway, breathing and circulation; orders a noncontrast computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) brain scan; performs a neurologic screening assessment; orders

laboratory studies; measures blood glucose and provides treatment if necessary; obtains a 12-lead ECG; and places the patient on NPO status.

- Within 20 minutes of the patient's arrival, the team obtains a focused history; conducts a neurologic assessment using the National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) or similar stroke severity tool; determines the time of symptom onset or last known normal time; and completes the CT or MRI scan.
- Within 45 minutes of the patient's arrival, the CT or MRI scan is interpreted.
- Within 60 minutes of the patient's arrival, fibrinolytic therapy is initiated for patients with ischemic stroke who have no contraindications.
- Within 3 hours of the patient's arrival, the patient is admitted to a monitored bed on a dedicated stroke unit or critical care unit.

### Practice Note

If a patient with suspected stroke presents to a facility that does not have a dedicated stroke unit, protocols should be in place to expedite patient transfer to the nearest hospital capable of providing a higher level of stroke care and post-treatment monitoring. If possible, the receiving facility should initiate fibrinolytic therapy before transferring the patient to a facility capable of providing a higher level of stroke care and post-treatment monitoring. If the receiving facility is not equipped to administer fibrinolytic therapy, the patient should be immediately transferred to a primary or comprehensive stroke center.

## The 8 Ds of Stroke Care

The "8 Ds of Stroke Care" highlight critical steps in the management of a patient with stroke (Box 11-2). A delay in carrying out any of these critical actions can be detrimental to the patient.

Every hospital that provides emergency services should have a written document detailing its capabilities and protocols for caring for patients with acute stroke and should share this information with the public and with the local emergency medical services (EMS) system. This document should identify areas of expertise in stroke care; identify capabilities with regard to neuroimaging, administering reperfusion therapies and providing post-stroke care; and establish criteria and protocols for patient transfer or direct transport to a higher level of care.

For hospitals that hold Joint Commission accreditation, the Joint Commission offers four levels of stroke program certification.

- **Acute stroke–ready hospitals:** These hospitals do not possess dedicated stroke units but have access to providers with expertise in diagnosing and treating acute ischemic stroke with fibrinolytic therapy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Additionally, these hospitals have transfer agreements with local primary or comprehensive stroke centers.
- **Primary stroke centers:** These hospitals have staff with neurological expertise dedicated to stroke care and are capable of administering fibrinolytic therapy. These facilities must have a dedicated stroke unit. Additionally, these hospitals have transfer agreements with local comprehensive stroke centers.
- **Thrombectomy-capable stroke center:** Like primary stroke centers, these hospitals have staff with extensive neurological expertise dedicated to stroke care and are capable of administering fibrinolytic therapy, but thrombectomy-capable stroke centers must also offer mechanical thrombectomy. These facilities must have dedicated neurointensive care beds for complex stroke patients on site and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Additionally, these hospitals have transfer agreements with local comprehensive stroke centers.
- **Comprehensive stroke center:** These hospitals have staff with extensive neurological expertise dedicated to stroke care and the ability to administer fibrinolytic therapy and perform mechanical thrombectomy, endovascular coiling and microsurgical clipping procedures for aneurysms.

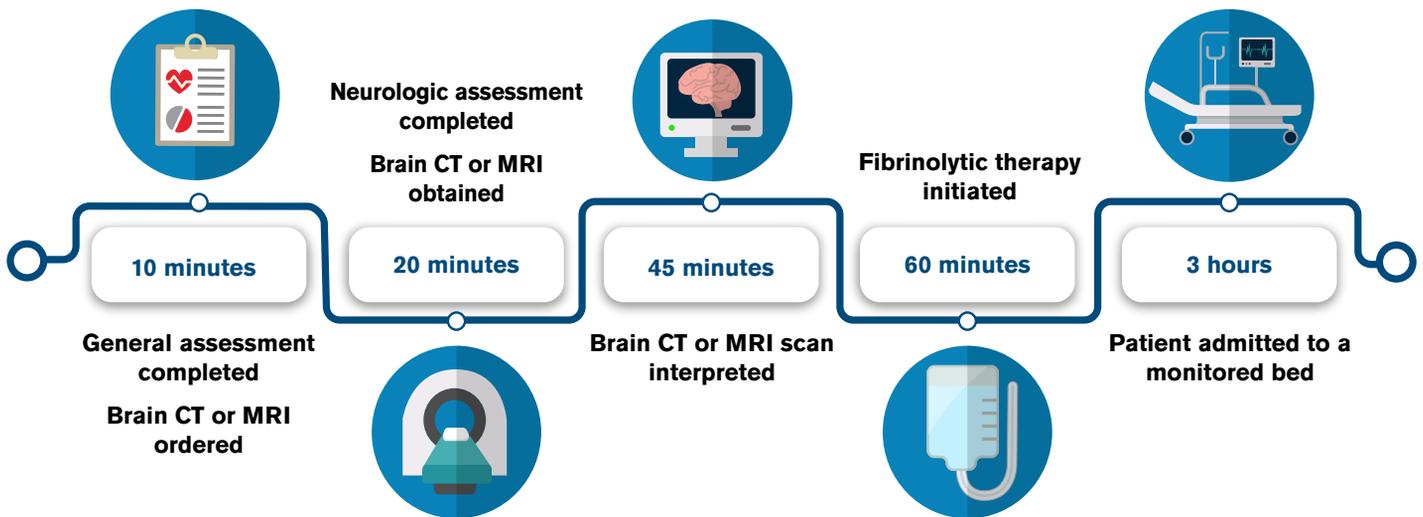


Figure 11-2 | Critical time periods for in-hospital assessment and management of acute ischemic stroke

- **Detection:** Early recognition of the signs and symptoms of stroke
- **Dispatch:** Early activation of, and response by, emergency medical services (EMS) professionals
- **Delivery:** Prompt transport of the patient to a facility capable of providing acute stroke care, with advanced notification to the receiving facility
- **Door:** Immediate triage by receiving staff
- **Data:** Prompt collection of the data necessary to inform treatment decisions, including medical history and physical examination data and data obtained through laboratory and imaging studies
- **Decision:** Prompt and expert evaluation of the data to inform treatment decisions
- **Drug/device:** Administration of fibrinolytic therapy, endovascular therapy or both within recommended time frames
- **Disposition:** Admission to a dedicated stroke unit or critical care unit

## Recognizing Stroke

### Clinical Presentation

Signs and symptoms of stroke include:

- Sudden weakness, numbness or tingling on one side of the face or body.
- Sudden onset of confusion.
- Sudden difficulty with language, including difficulty speaking, difficulty understanding or garbled speech.
- Sudden vision difficulties in one or both eyes.
- Difficulty with walking, balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache.

### Stroke Assessment Tools

#### Cincinnati Prehospital Stroke Scale

A rapid stroke assessment tool, such as the Cincinnati Prehospital Stroke Scale (CPSS), can be used to screen for signs of stroke (Box 11-3). The CPSS screens for three physical indicators of stroke: facial droop (Figure 11-3), arm drift and abnormal speech. An abnormal finding in any one of these areas is associated with a 72% probability of a stroke and is sufficient reason to activate the EMS system.

#### National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale

The National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS), which can be used to both assess and quantify deficits, should be administered to all patients with suspected

An abnormal finding in any one of the following three areas is associated with a 72% probability of stroke.

#### Facial Droop (ask patient to show teeth/smile)

- Normal: both sides of face move equally
- Abnormal: one side of the face does not move as well as the other side

#### Arm Drift (ask patient to close eyes and extend both arms straight out with the palms up for 10 seconds)

- Normal: both arms move the same, or both arms do not move at all
- Abnormal: one arm does not move, or one arm drifts downward as compared with the other

#### Abnormal Speech (ask patient to say “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”)

- Normal: patient uses correct words without slurring
- Abnormal: patient uses incorrect words, slurs words or is unable to speak

stroke once they arrive at the receiving facility (Figure 11-4). The NIHSS evaluates level of consciousness, best gaze, visual fields, facial palsy, motor function (arm and leg), limb ataxia, sensation, language deficits and extinction and inattention and helps to determine both the location and the severity of the stroke. The NIHSS is included at the end of this chapter.

## Patient Assessment

### Rapid Assessment

On initial impression, the patient may appear to be fully alert, have some degree of impaired level of



Figure 11-3 | Facial droop



Figure 11-4 | A neurologic assessment using the National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) or a similar assessment tool should be conducted when the patient arrives at the facility.

consciousness or appear unresponsive. Other signs that may be immediately apparent include difficulty speaking or facial droop.

## Primary Assessment

As with any acutely ill patient, the goal of the primary assessment is to quickly assess the patient's airway, breathing, circulation, disability and exposure and provide care as needed. Ensure an adequate airway and support ventilation as needed. If necessary, provide the minimal level of supplemental oxygen needed to maintain an oxygen saturation of 94% to 99%, unless another target is clinically indicated. Take care to avoid hyperoxia. Assess perfusion. If the patient is hypotensive, give fluids as needed to maintain adequate perfusion. Measure blood glucose and provide treatment as needed. Conduct a neurologic assessment using the NIHSS or similar assessment tool.

## Secondary Assessment

The goals of the secondary assessment are to further rule out differential diagnoses ("stroke mimics"; Box 11-4) as appropriate, determine the potential underlying

### Box 11-4 | Common Stroke Mimics

- Seizure
- Migraine
- Toxicity or metabolic disturbance (e.g., drug or alcohol intoxication, hypoglycemia)
- Intracranial tumor or infection
- Infectious processes
- Somatoform or conversion disorder

cause of the stroke and gather additional information that will aid in determining candidacy for planned interventions.

## History

Key information to elicit during the history includes:

- The time of symptom onset and the events leading up to the onset of signs and symptoms. If the patient was asleep when the stroke occurred, consider the time of onset to be the last time the patient was known to be asymptomatic.
- The presence of risk factors for stroke, arteriosclerosis and cardiac disease.
- Prior occurrences of migraine, seizure, infection, trauma or illicit drug use.
- The presence of comorbid conditions, including hypertension, diabetes and atrial fibrillation.
- The use of medications, including anticoagulants, antiplatelet agents, antihypertensive agents and insulin.
- Relevant events from the past medical history, including recent stroke or transient ischemic attack, myocardial infarction, surgery, trauma or bleeding.

## Physical Examination

Conduct a focused physical examination of the head and neck, chest and extremities to identify potential causes of stroke and rule out stroke mimics. The head and neck examination may reveal signs of cardiovascular disease (e.g., bruits, jugular venous distension) or injury as a result of trauma or seizure. The focus of the chest examination is to identify potential cardiac causes of stroke, such as a valve disorder. Examination of the extremities may reveal signs of cardiac disorders or other conditions, such as platelet disorders or coagulopathies.

Additionally, obtain vital signs and repeat the neurologic examination at frequent regular intervals.

## Diagnostic Tests

Brain imaging is essential for evaluating patients with suspected acute stroke. Brain imaging enables differentiation of ischemic stroke from hemorrhagic stroke and can reveal structural abnormalities that may be causing the patient's signs or symptoms or that might be contraindications to fibrinolytic therapy. Both noncontrast CT and MRI are acceptable imaging options. Noncontrast CT is the most widely used tool for urgent brain imaging in the setting of acute stroke.

Other diagnostic studies that are routinely ordered for patients with suspected acute ischemic stroke are summarized in Box 11-5. These tests assist in making

**All Patients**

- Brain imaging (noncontrast CT or MRI)
- Blood glucose level
- Serum electrolyte panel with renal function tests\*
- Complete blood count\*
- Cardiac markers\*
- Prothrombin time and international normalized ratio\*
- Activated partial thromboplastin time\*
- 12-Lead ECG

**Select Patients**

- Thrombin time and/or ecarin clotting time (for patients known or suspected to be on direct thrombin inhibitors or direct factor Xa inhibitors)
- Hepatic function tests
- Toxicology screen
- Blood alcohol level
- Pregnancy test
- Arterial blood gases (in cases of suspected hypoxia)
- Chest radiography (in cases of suspected lung disease)
- Lumbar puncture (in cases where subarachnoid hemorrhage is suspected, but CT scan results are negative for blood)
- Electroencephalography (in cases of suspected seizures)

\*Obtaining these tests and interpreting their results should not delay ordering and initiation of therapy unless there is clinical suspicion of a bleeding abnormality or thrombocytopenia, the patient has received heparin or warfarin, the patient has received other anticoagulants or laboratory results have revealed a platelet count of less than 100,000/mm<sup>3</sup>, an international normalized ratio (INR) greater than 1.7, an activated partial thromboplastin time (aPTT) greater than 40 seconds or a prothrombin time (PT) greater than 15 seconds.

a definitive diagnosis, determining underlying causes and evaluating candidacy for therapeutic interventions. Additional tests may be ordered depending on history and physical examination findings.

**Practice Note**

Obtaining laboratory studies and interpreting their results should not delay ordering and initiation of therapy unless there is clinical suspicion for conditions that would increase the patient's risk for bleeding.

**Approach to the Patient**

The *Adult Acute Stroke Code Card* summarizes the approach to a patient with acute stroke.

**Assess and Recognize**

When stroke is suspected on the basis of the rapid and primary assessments, activate the stroke team immediately per facility protocol. Order a noncontrast CT or MRI scan of the brain within 10 minutes of the patient's arrival. Results should be obtained within 20 minutes and interpreted within 45 minutes. Measure blood glucose levels and provide treatment as

necessary. Order laboratory studies (such as a complete blood count and coagulation studies) and obtain a 12-lead ECG, but do not delay brain imaging to do so. Place the patient on NPO status until the ability to swallow can be assessed. Obtain a focused history (including the time of symptom onset) and complete a neurologic screening assessment using the NIHSS or a similar assessment tool.

**Care****Hemorrhagic Stroke**

If brain imaging reveals hemorrhage, treatment depends on the cause and severity of the bleeding. Measures are taken to support the airway, oxygenation, ventilation and perfusion. In addition, care entails measures to control the internal bleeding, including consideration of reversal of anticoagulants, consideration of treatment of hypertensive crisis, management of increased intracranial pressure and treatment of seizures. A neurology or neurosurgical consult is necessary and the patient may need to be transferred to a comprehensive stroke center or a neurosurgical center for definitive care.

**Ischemic Stroke**

If brain imaging does not reveal hemorrhage, consider fibrinolytic therapy, endovascular therapy, or both, based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. If serial neurologic

examinations show that the patient's neurologic function is improving toward normal, fibrinolytic therapy may not be indicated. In this case, consider adjuvant therapies, seek neurology/expert consult and admit or prepare the patient for transfer to a stroke unit.

### Fibrinolytic Therapy

For patients with ischemic stroke who meet the eligibility criteria (see the *Adult Acute Stroke Code Card*), fibrinolytic therapy is the first-line treatment. Administration of intravenous recombinant tissue plasminogen activator (rtPA) as soon as possible and within 3 hours of the onset of signs and symptoms is optimal (with a goal "door-to-needle" time of less than 60 minutes). For select patients, intravenous rtPA may be administered within 4.5 hours after the onset of signs and symptoms. Following the administration of rtPA, therapy with anticoagulant or antiplatelet agents should be stopped for 24 hours.

### Endovascular Therapy

Studies suggest that eligible patients should receive endovascular therapy in addition to fibrinolytic therapy. Endovascular therapy entails the use of catheters to deliver a clot-disrupting or a clot-retrieval device directly to the site of the obstruction. In mechanical thrombectomy, stent retrievers are preferred over coil retrievers. In order to be eligible for endovascular therapy with a stent retriever, patients must meet the following criteria:

- A prestroke modified Rankin Scale (mRS) score of 0 to 1
- A diagnosis of acute ischemic stroke receiving intravenous rtPA within 4.5 hours of the onset of signs and symptoms
- Causative occlusion of the internal carotid artery or proximal middle cerebral artery
- Age 18 years or older
- An NIHSS score of 6 or greater
- Alberta Stroke Programme Early Computed Tomography (ASPECT) score of 6 or greater

- No contraindications to initiation of endovascular therapy (groin puncture) within 6 hours of the onset of signs and symptoms

Endovascular therapy is ideally administered as soon as possible and within 6 hours of the onset of symptoms, although this time frame may be extended for some patients. If transfer is needed, the goal is to complete the transfer within 60 minutes of the patient's arrival.



### Practice Note

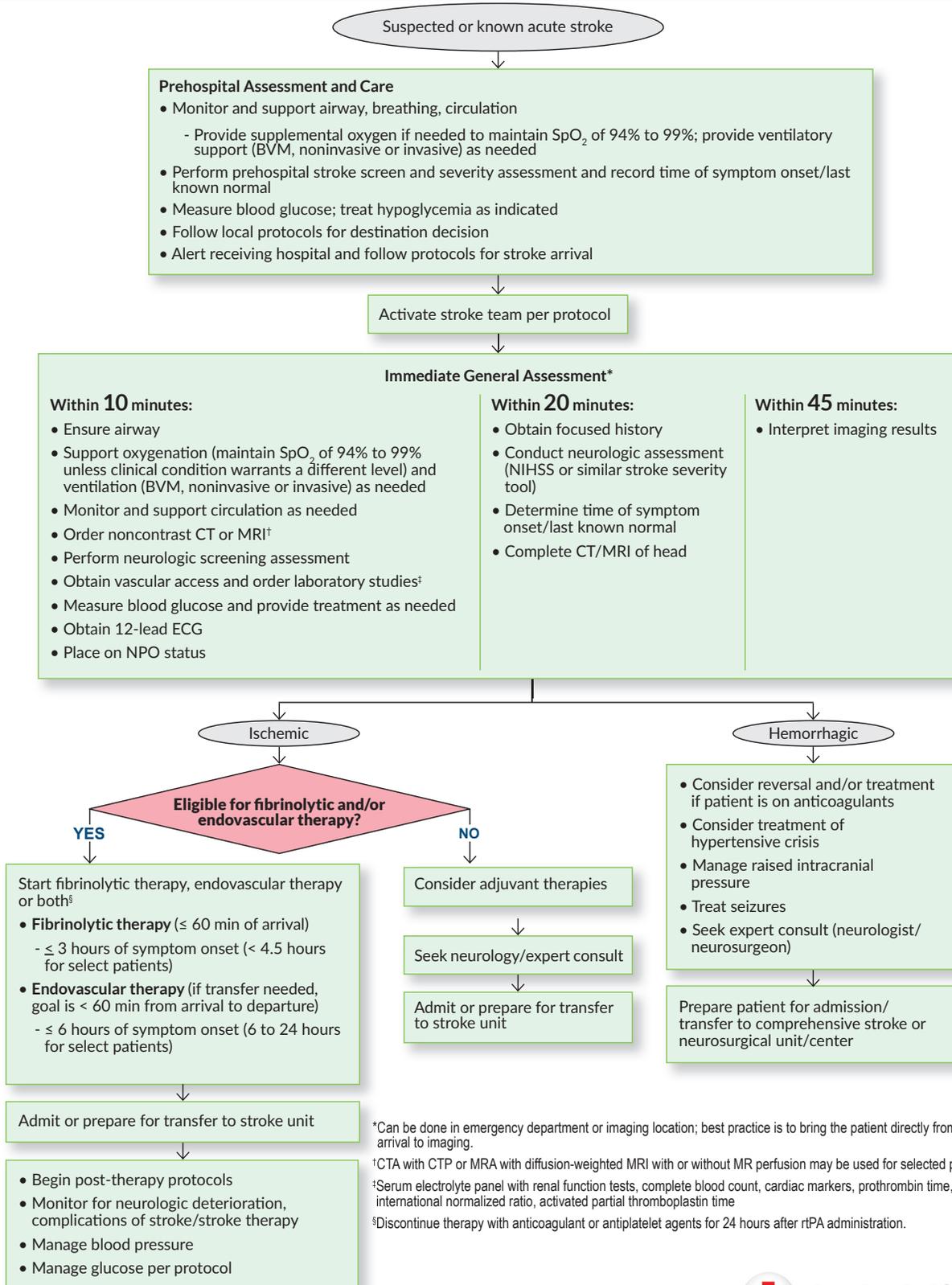
Intra-arterial fibrinolysis with rtPA is considered beneficial for patients with ischemic stroke caused by occlusion of the middle cerebral artery who are not eligible for intravenous rtPA. Intra-arterial fibrinolysis should only be performed at a qualified stroke center, and it should not delay mechanical thrombectomy. When performed in conjunction with mechanical thrombectomy, intra-arterial fibrinolysis is considered to have the best overall success rate of recanalization without having an appreciable effect on the rate of intracranial hemorrhage. Intra-arterial administration of rtPA has not yet been approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

### Admission

Within 3 hours of arriving at the facility, the patient should be admitted to a monitored bed on a dedicated stroke unit or critical care unit. Care at this stage includes supporting airway, breathing and circulation; initiating post-therapy protocols; monitoring for neurologic deterioration, complications of the stroke and its treatment (e.g., intracranial hemorrhage and other bleeding complications); and managing blood pressure and glucose according to facility protocols and the provider's clinical judgment.

# ADULT ACUTE STROKE

ALS - 2020 VERSION



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Training Services

# ADULT ACUTE STROKE

ALS - 2020 VERSION

## Signs and Symptoms of Stroke

- Acute-onset mental status changes or confusion
- Sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the body
- Sudden difficulty with language (e.g., difficulty speaking, difficulty understanding, garbled speech)
- Sudden loss of vision in one or both eyes
- Difficulty with walking, balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache

## Cincinnati Prehospital Stroke Scale (CPSS)

An abnormal finding in any one of the following three areas is associated with a 72% probability of stroke.

### Facial Droop (ask patient to show teeth/smile)

- Normal: both sides of face move equally
- Abnormal: one side of the face does not move as well as the other side

### Arm Drift (ask patient to close eyes and extend both arms straight out with the palms up for 10 seconds)

- Normal: both arms move the same, or both arms do not move at all
- Abnormal: one arm does not move, or one arm drifts downward as compared with the other

### Abnormal Speech (ask patient to say "You can't teach an old dog new tricks")

- Normal: patient uses correct words without slurring
- Abnormal: patient uses incorrect words, slurs words or is unable to speak

## Eligibility Criteria for Intravenous rtPA Administration in Patients with Acute Ischemic Stroke

Treatment Timing	Inclusion Criteria	Absolute Exclusion Criteria	Relative Exclusion Criteria
Within 3 hours of symptom onset or patient last known well or at baseline state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ischemic stroke diagnosis</li> <li>• Measurable neurologic deficit</li> <li>• <math>\geq 18</math> years of age</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant head trauma or stroke within last 3 months</li> <li>• Symptoms suggestive of subarachnoid hemorrhage</li> <li>• Arterial puncture at noncompressible site within last 7 days</li> <li>• History of intracranial hemorrhage, intracranial tumor, AVM or aneurysm</li> <li>• Recent intracranial or intraspinal surgery</li> <li>• Hypertension (systolic blood pressure <math>&gt; 185</math> mmHg or diastolic blood pressure <math>&gt; 110</math> mmHg)</li> <li>• Active internal bleeding</li> <li>• Risk factors for acute bleeding, including but not limited to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low platelet count (<math>&lt; 100,000/\text{mm}^3</math>)</li> <li>- Heparin administration within the last 48 hours, resulting in an aPTT value greater than the upper limit of normal</li> <li>- Current use of an anticoagulant with an INR <math>&gt; 1.7</math> or a PT <math>&gt; 15</math> sec</li> <li>- Current use of direct thrombin inhibitors or direct factor Xa inhibitors with elevated results on sensitive laboratory tests (e.g., aPTT, INR, platelet count or ECT; TT or appropriate factor Xa activity assays)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Low blood glucose level (<math>&lt; 50</math> mg/dL or <math>2.7</math> mmol/L)</li> <li>• Multilobar infarction on CT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor or rapidly improving stroke symptoms (clearing spontaneously)</li> <li>• Pregnancy</li> <li>• Seizure at onset</li> <li>• Major surgery or serious trauma within past 14 days</li> <li>• Gastrointestinal malignancy or recent gastrointestinal or urinary tract hemorrhage within past 21 days</li> <li>• Recent acute myocardial infarction within past 3 months</li> </ul>
Within 3 to 4.5 hours of symptom onset* or patient last known well or at baseline state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ischemic stroke diagnosis</li> <li>• Measurable neurologic deficit</li> </ul>	In addition to the exclusion criteria for treatment within 3 hours of symptom onset: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current anticoagulant therapy (INR <math>&gt; 1.7</math>)</li> <li>• History of ischemic stroke within previous 3 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients <math>\geq 80</math> years of age with a history of both diabetes mellitus and prior stroke</li> </ul>

\*Intravenous rtPA administration may also be considered for a patient with acute ischemic stroke who awakens with stroke symptoms or who has an unclear time of symptom onset greater than 4.5 hours from the last known well or baseline state who has a DW-MRI lesion smaller than one-third of the MCA territory and no visible signal change on FLAIR.

## Blood Pressure Management

Patients who have elevated blood pressure and are otherwise eligible for treatment with intravenous rtPA (or mechanical thrombectomy) should have their blood pressure carefully lowered so that their systolic blood pressure (SBP) is less than 185 mmHg and their diastolic blood pressure (DBP) is less than 110 mmHg before intravenous fibrinolytic therapy is initiated.

### Management of blood pressure for a patient otherwise eligible for emergency reperfusion therapy except that blood pressure is greater than 185/110 mmHg

#### Labetalol

- 10 to 20 mg IV over 1 to 2 min, may repeat 1 time OR

#### Nicardipine

- 5 mg/h IV, titrate up by 2.5 mg/h every 5 to 15 min (maximum 15 mg/h); when desired blood pressure reached, adjust to maintain proper blood pressure limits OR

#### Clevidipine

- 1 to 2 mg/h IV, titrate by doubling the dose every 2 to 5 min until desired blood pressure reached (maximum 21 mg/h)

Other agents (e.g., hydralazine, enalaprilat) may also be considered. If blood pressure is not maintained at less than or equal to 185/110 mmHg, do not administer rtPA.

### Management of blood pressure during and after rtPA or other emergency reperfusion therapy to maintain blood pressure at less than or equal to 180/105 mmHg

Monitor blood pressure every 15 min for 2 h from the start of rtPA therapy, then every 30 min for 6 h, and then every hour for 16 h.

If SBP  $> 180$  to 230 mmHg or DBP  $> 105$  to 120 mmHg:

#### Labetalol

- 10 mg IV followed by continuous IV infusion 2 to 8 mg/min OR

#### Nicardipine

- 5 mg/h IV; titrate up to desired effect by 2.5 mg/h every 5 to 15 min (maximum 15 mg/h) OR

#### Clevidipine

- 1 to 2 mg/h IV; titrate by doubling the dose every 2 to 5 min until desired blood pressure reached (maximum 21 mg/h)

If blood pressure is not controlled or DBP  $> 140$  mmHg, consider IV sodium nitroprusside.



# National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS)

## Instructions

Administer stroke scale items in the order listed. Record performance in each category after each subscale exam. Do not go back and change scores. Follow directions provided for each exam technique. Scores should reflect what the patient does, not what the clinician thinks the patient can do. The clinician should record answers while administering the exam and work quickly. Except where indicated, the patient should not be coached (i.e., repeated requests to patient to make a special effort).

## 1a

### Instructions

**Level of Consciousness:** The investigator must choose a response if a full evaluation is prevented by such obstacles as an endotracheal tube, language barrier, orotracheal trauma/bandages. A 3 is scored only if the patient makes no movement (other than reflexive posturing) in response to noxious stimulation.

## Level of Consciousness

### Scale Definition

- 0** Alert; keenly responsive.
- 1** Not alert; but arousable by minor stimulation to obey, answer, or respond.
- 2** Not alert; requires repeated stimulation to attend, or is obtunded and requires strong or painful stimulation to make movements (not stereotyped).
- 3** Responds only with reflex motor or autonomic effects, or totally unresponsive, flaccid, and areflexic.

Score

## Level of Consciousness

### Instructions

**LOC Questions:** The patient is asked the month and his/her age. The answer must be correct — there is no partial credit for being close. Aphasic and stuporous patients who do not comprehend the questions will score 2. Patients unable to speak because of endotracheal intubation, orotracheal trauma, severe dysarthria from any cause, language barrier, or any other problem not secondary to aphasia are given a 1. It is important that only the initial answer be graded and that the examiner not "help" the patient with verbal or non-verbal cues.

## 1b

### Scale Definition

- 0** Answers both questions correctly.
- 1** Answers one question correctly.
- 2** Answers neither question correctly.

Score

## 1c

### Instructions

**LOC Commands:** The patient is asked to open and close the eyes and then to grip and release the non-paretic hand. Substitute another one-step command if the hands cannot be used. Credit is given if an unequivocal attempt is made but not completed due to weakness. If the patient does not respond to command, the task should be demonstrated to him or her (pantomime), and the result scored (i.e., follows none, one, or two commands). Patients with trauma, amputation, or other physical impediments should be given suitable one-step commands. Only the first attempt is scored.

## Level of Consciousness

### Scale Definition

- 0** Performs both tasks correctly.
- 1** Performs one task correctly.
- 2** Performs neither task correctly.

Score

## Best Gaze

### Instructions

**Best Gaze:** Only horizontal eye movements will be tested. Voluntary or reflexive (oculocephalic) eye movements will be scored, but caloric testing is not done. If the patient has a conjugate deviation of the eyes that can be overcome by voluntary or reflexive activity, the score will be 1. If a patient has an isolated peripheral nerve paresis (CN III, IV, or VI), score a 1. Gaze is testable in all aphasic patients. Patients with ocular trauma, bandages, pre-existing blindness, or other disorder of visual acuity or fields should be tested with reflexive movements, and a choice made by the investigator. Establishing eye contact and then moving about the patient from side to side will occasionally clarify the presence of a partial gaze palsy.

## 2

### Scale Definition

- 0** Normal.
- 1** Partial gaze palsy; gaze is abnormal in one or both eyes, but forced deviation or total gaze paresis is not present.
- 2** Forced deviation, or total gaze paresis is not overcome by the oculocephalic maneuver.

Score

## 3

### Instructions

**Visual:** Visual fields (upper and lower quadrants) are tested by confrontation, using finger counting or visual threat, as appropriate. Patients may be encouraged, but if they look at the side of the moving fingers appropriately, this can be scored as normal. If there is unilateral blindness or enucleation, visual fields in the remaining eye are scored. Score 1 only if a clear-cut asymmetry, including quadrantanopia, is found. If patient is blind from any cause, score 3. Double simultaneous stimulation is performed at this point. If there is extinction, patient receives a 1, and the results are used to respond to item 11.

## Visual

### Scale Definition

- 0** No visual loss.
- 1** Partial hemianopia.
- 2** Complete hemianopia.
- 3** Bilateral hemianopia (blind including cortical blindness).

Score

## Facial Palsy

### Instructions

#### Facial Palsy:

Ask — or use pantomime to encourage — the patient to show teeth or raise eyebrows and close eyes. Score symmetry of grimace in response to noxious stimuli in the poorly responsive or non-comprehending patient. If facial trauma/bandages, orotracheal tube, tape, or other physical barriers obscure the face, these should be removed to the extent possible.

0  
1  
2  
3

### Scale Definition

**Normal** symmetrical movements.

**Minor paralysis** (flattened nasolabial fold, asymmetry on smiling).

**Partial paralysis** (total or near-total paralysis of lower face).

**Complete paralysis** of one or both sides (absence of facial movement in the upper and lower face).

Score



## 5

### Instructions

#### Motor Arm:

The limb is placed in the appropriate position: extend the arms (palms down) 90 degrees (if sitting) or 45 degrees (if supine). Drift is scored if the arm falls before 10 seconds. The aphasic patient is encouraged using urgency in the voice and pantomime, but not noxious stimulation. Each limb is tested in turn, beginning with the non-paretic arm. Only in the case of amputation or joint fusion at the shoulder, the examiner should record the score as untestable (UN) and clearly write the explanation for this choice.

5<sup>a</sup>  
5<sup>b</sup>

Left Arm

Right Arm

Score

Score



## Motor Arm

### Scale Definition

**No drift;** limb holds 90 (or 45) degrees for full 10 seconds.

**Drift;** limb holds 90 (or 45) degrees, but drifts down before full 10 seconds; does not hit bed or other support.

**Some effort against gravity;** limb cannot get to or maintain (if cued) 90 (or 45) degrees, drifts down to bed, but has some effort against gravity.

**No effort against gravity;** limb falls.

**No movement.**

**Amputation** or joint fusion, explain:

0  
1  
2  
3  
4  
UN

## Motor Leg

### Instructions

#### Motor Leg:

The limb is placed in the appropriate position: hold the leg at 30 degrees (always tested supine). Drift is scored if the leg falls before 5 seconds. The aphasic patient is encouraged using urgency in the voice and pantomime but not noxious stimulation. Each limb is tested in turn, beginning with the non-paretic leg. Only in the case of amputation or joint fusion at the hip, the examiner should record the score as untestable (UN) and clearly write the explanation for this choice.

6<sup>a</sup>  
6<sup>b</sup>

Left Leg

Right Leg

Score

Score



0  
1  
2  
3  
4  
UN

### Scale Definition

**No drift;** leg holds 30-degree position for full 5 seconds.

**Drift;** leg falls by the end of the 5-second period but does not hit the bed.

**Some effort against gravity;** leg falls to bed by 5 seconds but has some effort against gravity.

**No effort against gravity;** leg falls to bed immediately.

**No movement.**

**Amputation** or joint fusion, explain:

## 7

### Instructions

#### Limb Ataxia:

This item is aimed at finding evidence of a unilateral cerebellar lesion. Test with eyes open. In case of visual defect, ensure testing is done in intact visual field. The finger-nose-finger and heel-shin tests are performed on both sides, and ataxia is scored only if present out of proportion to weakness. Ataxia is absent in the patient who cannot understand or is paralyzed. Only in the case of amputation or joint fusion, the examiner should record the score as untestable (UN) and clearly write the explanation for this choice. In case of blindness, test by having the patient touch nose from extended arm position.

## Limb Ataxia

### Scale Definition

**Absent.**

**Present in one limb.**

**Present in two limbs.**

**Amputation** or joint fusion, explain:

0  
1  
2  
UN

Score



## Sensory

### Instructions

#### Sensory:

Sensation or grimace to pinprick when tested, or withdrawal from noxious stimulus in the obtunded or aphasic patient. Only sensory loss attributed to stroke is scored as abnormal and the examiner should test as many body areas [arms (not hands), legs, trunk, face] as needed to accurately check for hemisensory loss. A score of 2, "severe or total sensory loss," should only be given when a severe or total loss of sensation can be clearly demonstrated. Stuporous and aphasic patients will, therefore, probably score 1 or 0. The patient with brainstem stroke who has bilateral loss of sensation is scored 2. If the patient does not respond and is quadriplegic, score 2. Patients in a coma (item 1a-3) are automatically given a 2 on this item.

0  
1  
2

### Scale Definition

**Normal;** no sensory loss.

**Mild-to-moderate sensory loss;** patient feels pinprick is less sharp or is dull on the affected side; or there is a loss of superficial pain with pinprick, but patient is aware of being touched.

**Severe or total sensory loss;** patient is not aware of being touched in the face, arm, and leg.

Score



## 9

### Instructions

#### Best Language:

A great deal of information about comprehension will be obtained during the preceding sections of the examination. For this scale item, the patient is asked to describe what is happening in the attached picture, to name the items on the attached list of sentences. Comprehension is judged from responses here, as well as to all of the commands in the preceding general neurological exam. If visual loss interferes with the tests, ask the patient to identify objects placed in the hand, repeat, and produce speech. The intubated patient should be asked to write. The patient in a coma (item 1a-3) will automatically score 3 on this item. The examiner must choose a score for the patient with stupor or limited cooperation, but a score of 3 should be used only if the patient is mute and follows no one-step commands.

## Best Language

### Scale Definition

**No aphasia;** normal.

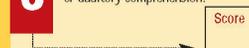
**Mild-to-moderate aphasia;** some obvious loss of fluency or facility of comprehension, without significant limitation on ideas expressed or form of expression. Reduction of speech and/or comprehension, however, makes conversation about provided materials difficult or impossible. For example, in conversation about provided materials, examiner can identify picture or naming card content from patient's response.

**Severe aphasia;** all communication is through fragmentary expression; great need for inference, questioning, and guessing by the listener. Range of information that can be exchanged is limited; listener carries burden of communication. Examiner cannot identify materials provided from patient response.

**Mute, global aphasia;** no usable speech or auditory comprehension.

0  
1  
2  
3

Score



## Dysarthria

### Instructions

#### Dysarthria:

If patient is thought to be normal, an adequate sample of speech must be obtained by asking patient to read or repeat words from the attached list. If the patient has severe aphasia, the clarity of articulation of spontaneous speech can be rated. Only if the patient is intubated or has other physical barriers to producing speech, the examiner should record the score as untestable (UN) and clearly write the explanation for this choice. Do not tell the patient why he/she is being tested.

0  
1  
2  
UN

### Scale Definition

**0** Normal.

**1** **Mild-to-moderate dysarthria;** patient slurs at least some words and, at worst, can be understood with some difficulty.

**2** **Severe dysarthria;** patient's speech is so slurred as to be unintelligible in the absence of or out of proportion to any dysphasia, or is mute/anarthric.

**UN** **Intubated** or other physical barrier, explain:

Score



# 11

### Instructions

#### Extinction and Inattention (formerly Neglect):

Sufficient information to identify neglect may be obtained during the prior testing. If the patient has a severe visual loss preventing visual double simultaneous stimulation, and the cutaneous stimuli are normal, the score is normal. If the patient has aphasia but does appear to attend to both sides, the score is normal. The presence of visual spatial neglect or anosognosia may also be taken as evidence of abnormality. Since the abnormality is scored only if present, the item is never untestable.

0  
1  
2

## Extinction and Inattention

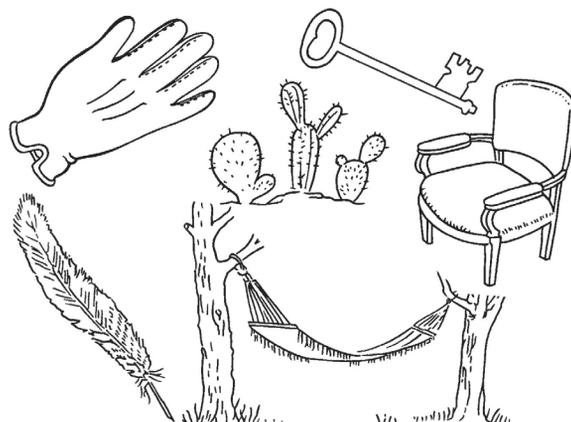
### Scale Definition

**0** No abnormality.

**1** **Visual, tactile, auditory, spatial, or personal inattention,** or extinction to bilateral simultaneous stimulation in one of the sensory modalities.

**2** **Profound hemi-inattention or extinction to more than one modality;** does not recognize own hand or orients to only one side of space.

Score



**You know how.  
Down to earth.  
I got home from work.  
Near the table in the dining room.  
They heard him speak on the  
radio last night.**

**MAMA  
TIP – TOP  
FIFTY – FIFTY  
THANKS  
HUCKLEBERRY  
BASEBALL PLAYER**



# Glossary

## Acute coronary syndromes

A general term for a group of life-threatening conditions that occur because of a sudden reduction in blood flow to the heart

## Arteriovenous malformation

A congenital vascular lesion, often found in the central nervous system, consisting of a mass of entwined arteries and veins connected by fistulae

## Atelectasis

Alveolar collapse

## Atrioventricular (AV) dissociation

A situation that occurs when the atria and ventricles are being driven by independent pacemakers and are contracting at their own intrinsic rates

## Atrioventricular (AV) junction

The zone of tissue surrounding the atrioventricular (AV) node

## Capnography

A noninvasive way of measuring the end-tidal carbon dioxide (ETCO<sub>2</sub>) level

## Carina

The point where the trachea bifurcates into the right and left main bronchi

## Chest compression fraction (CCF)

An indicator of CPR quality; represents the percentage of time during the resuscitation effort spent performing chest compressions

## Closed-loop communication

A communication technique used to prevent misunderstandings; the receiver confirms that the message is received and understood

## Coronary perfusion pressure (CPP)

A reflection of myocardial blood flow; the difference between the pressure in the aorta and the pressure in the right atrium during diastole

## Corrected QT interval (QTc)

A calculation used to give a QT value that is theoretically independent of rate

## Crew resource management

A concept that helps to promote effective and efficient teamwork and reduce the likelihood of errors by encouraging problem solving and communication among team members

## Critical thinking

The process of thinking clearly and rationally to identify the connection between information and actions

## Dynamic hyperinflation

Auto-positive end-expiratory pressure (auto-PEEP); occurs when exhalation time is insufficient and the lungs do not completely empty before the next breath, preventing the respiratory system from returning to its resting end-expiratory equilibrium volume between breath cycles

## Electrical alternans

Beat-to-beat variation in the amplitude of QRS complexes

## Embolic stroke

A type of ischemic stroke that occurs when a plaque fragment or blood clot forms elsewhere within the circulatory system and travels to the cerebral circulation

## Epiglottis

A leaf-shaped cartilaginous structure that closes over the opening of the larynx during the act of swallowing

## Expiratory plateau

The phase of the capnography waveform representing exhalation of the last of the carbon dioxide-laden air from the most distal alveoli

## Extracorporeal cardiopulmonary resuscitation (ECPR)

A specialized intervention that uses venoarterial extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) in addition to standard CPR

## Fibrillatory waves

The slight undulation of the baseline seen on the ECG in atrial fibrillation

## Fibrinolytic therapy

Drug therapy to lyse blood clots

## Gas exchange

The molecular process of adding oxygen to, and removing carbon dioxide from, the blood

## Hemorrhagic stroke

A sudden neurologic deficit caused by rupture of a blood vessel in the brain

## Hyperventilation

The state of exhaling carbon dioxide at a faster rate than the body can produce it

### **Hypoventilation**

The state of producing more carbon dioxide than can be exhaled

### **Infranodal**

Distal to the node

### **Inspiratory downslope**

The phase of the capnography waveform representing inhalation

### **Intracerebral hemorrhage**

A type of hemorrhagic stroke that occurs when an artery located within the brain bursts, causing bleeding into the surrounding brain tissue

### **Ischemia/reperfusion response**

An inflammatory response induced by the reperfusion of tissues previously deprived of blood flow, as in cardiac arrest

### **Ischemic stroke**

A sudden neurologic deficit caused by obstruction of a blood vessel supplying the brain

### **Laryngopharynx**

The region of the pharynx that extends from the oropharynx to the level of the cricoid cartilage; also called the hypopharynx

### **Left uterine displacement (LUD)**

A technique used during CPR in a pregnant patient to move the gravid uterus up and toward the left to relieve pressure on the inferior vena cava and maximize the return of blood to the heart and cardiac output

### **Lung compliance**

The ability of the lung to stretch and expand

### **Monomorphic ventricular tachycardia**

A wide-complex ventricular tachycardia characterized by QRS complexes that are generally the same shape; produced by one ectopic focus in the ventricles

### **Nasopharynx**

The region of the pharynx that extends from the base of the skull to the soft palate and is located posterior to the nasal cavities

### **Oropharynx**

The region of the pharynx that extends from the hard palate to the level of the hyoid bone and is located posterior to the oral cavity

### **Oxygen–hemoglobin dissociation curve**

A graphical depiction of the relationship between the partial pressure of oxygen ( $\text{PaO}_2$ ) and the arterial oxygen

saturation ( $\text{SaO}_2$ )

### **Percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI)**

A procedure that uses balloon angioplasty, with or without stent placement, to open occluded coronary arteries

### **Phased response approach**

A model that organizes the team response to an emergency into seven phases and incorporates the concept of crew resource management and the skills of communication, critical thinking and problem solving

### **Polymorphic ventricular tachycardia**

A wide-complex ventricular tachycardia characterized by QRS complexes that vary in shape and rate; produced by two or more ectopic foci in the ventricles

### **Post–cardiac arrest syndrome**

The pathophysiologic consequences of cardiac arrest, comprising four areas (brain injury, myocardial dysfunction, systemic dysfunction and persistent precipitating conditions)

### **Primary percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI)**

Percutaneous coronary intervention performed as the first-line therapy for ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI)

### **Problem solving**

The ability to use readily available resources to find solutions to challenging or complex situations or issues that arise

### **Pulseless electrical activity (PEA)**

A term used to describe rhythms that are organized on the monitor (i.e., all of the QRS complexes are similar in appearance) but which fail to produce a palpable pulse

### **Quantitative capnography**

The measurement of end-tidal carbon dioxide ( $\text{ETCO}_2$ ) expressed as a value and as a waveform

### **Quantitative capnometry**

The measurement of end-tidal carbon dioxide ( $\text{ETCO}_2$ ) expressed as a value

### **Rapid response team**

A team of highly trained and skilled personnel who work together to care for a patient when signs of cardiopulmonary compromise or shock are noted

### **Respiration**

The process of moving oxygen and carbon dioxide between the atmosphere and the body's cells

**Respiratory arrest**

Complete cessation of the breathing effort

**Respiratory baseline**

The phase on the capnography waveform representing the beginning of exhalation

**Respiratory distress**

The earliest stage on the continuum of respiratory compromise; the patient is using compensatory mechanisms to maintain oxygenation and ventilation adequate to meet metabolic demands

**Respiratory failure**

The intermediate stage on the continuum of respiratory compromise; the respiratory system is no longer able to meet metabolic demands

**Respiratory upstroke**

The phase on the capnography waveform representing the exhalation of air containing carbon dioxide from the alveoli

**Resuscitation team**

A team of highly trained and skilled personnel who work together to provide resuscitative care when a patient experiences respiratory or cardiac arrest

**Resuscitative cesarean delivery (RCD)**

Surgical delivery of the fetus performed when a pregnant patient is in cardiac arrest with the goals of resuscitating the pregnant patient and increasing the likelihood of fetal survival

**Subarachnoid hemorrhage**

A type of hemorrhagic stroke that occurs when a blood vessel located on the surface of the brain ruptures, causing bleeding into the subarachnoid space

**Supraglottic airway**

An advanced airway that is not passed through the vocal cords, such as the laryngeal mask airway and the laryngeal tube

**Targeted temperature management (TTM)**

A neuroprotective intervention that involves lowering and maintaining the core body temperature in the range of 32° C to 36° C for a period of at least 24 hours

**Teamwork**

The actions of a group of people with well-defined roles and responsibilities making a coordinated effort to achieve a common goal

**Thrombotic stroke**

A type of ischemic stroke caused by rupture of an atherosclerotic plaque in a cerebral artery that results in the formation of a thrombus

**Transglottic airway**

An advanced airway that is passed through the vocal cords, such as an endotracheal tube

**Transthoracic impedance**

The body's resistance to current flow that is caused by the thoracic structures, including soft tissue and bone, between defibrillation pads or paddles and the heart

**Ventilation**

The mechanical process of moving air into and out of the body

**Ventilation-perfusion mismatch**

An imbalance between the air that reaches the alveoli (i.e., ventilation) and blood flow to the alveoli (i.e., perfusion) in a portion of the lung



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# Index

**Note:** *b* indicates box; *t* indicates table

8 Ds of Stroke Care, 145, 147*b*

ABCDE mnemonic, 77-78, 91, 104, 137

Abdominal thrusts, 11–12, 78

Acidosis, 40, 86, 112, 114*b*, 116, 128*t*

ACS. *See* Acute coronary syndromes

Acute coronary syndromes (ACS), 135, 157

classification of, 134

code card for, 141-142

drug therapy for, 43*t*, 139

goals for management of, 134

pathophysiology of, 134

recognition of, 135-137

treatment of, 138-140

Adjuvant drug therapy, 140

AED. *See* Automated external defibrillator

Airway

assessment of, 77-80

methods of maintaining patent airway, 77-78

obstructed (care for), 11–12

Airways, advanced

confirming placement of, 27, 30-31, 77-78

during CPR, 10-11, 27, 28*t*, 117

endotracheal tube, 28*t*, 29

indications for, 30

laryngeal mask airway, 27-28

laryngeal tube, 28*t*, 29

patient monitoring, 30-31

types of

supraglottic, 27

transglottic, 27

Airways, basic

nasopharyngeal airway, 26-27

insertion of, 46-47

oropharyngeal airway, 26

insertion of, 44-45

Amiodarone, 41-42*t*, 103, 107, 119

Antiarrhythmic agent, 41-43*t*, 104

in the treatment of cardiac arrest, 119

in the treatment of tachycardia, 41-43*t*, 107

patient history and, 104

Arrhythmias, drug therapy for, 105-107

Arterial blood gases, 80, 114, 116, 128

Aspirin

in acute coronary syndromes, 139

Assess, Recognize and Care, 76

Assessment

primary, 77–78

rapid, 76–77

secondary, 79–80

systematic approach to, 85–87

Asystole, 112–113, 118–119

Atrial fibrillation, 102–103

Atrial flutter, 101

Atrial rate, calculation of, 97

Atrioventricular (AV) block

approach to differentiating, 99

causes of, 99

classification of, 98–100

Atropine, 41*t*, 105

Automated external defibrillator (AED), 10–11, 21–23

coordinated team response and, 71–72

AV block. *See* Atrioventricular block

β-adrenergic agonists, 105

β-blockers

adjuvant drug therapy and, 140*b*

in cardiac arrest, 98

in the treatment of cardiovascular and

cerebrovascular disorders, 43*t*

Bag-valve-mask resuscitator (BVM), 31–32, 33*t*,

48–49

complications from improper technique, 31

in respiratory arrest, 91

parts of, 31

technique, 31

use with advanced airway, 31

Bivalirudin, 43

Bradycardia

approach to patient with, 104

code card for, 108

Breathing, assessment of, 79

BVM. *See* Bag-valve-mask resuscitator

Capnography, 153

and ROSC, 9

evaluation of the capnography waveform, 90

phases of the normal waveform, 90

use in confirming advanced airway placement,  
30–31

use in monitoring effectiveness of CPR, 9

use in monitoring effectiveness of ventilations, 9, 30

use in respiratory emergencies, 89–92

Cardiac arrest

approach to patient in, 117–119

code card for, 122

drug therapy for, 40–43*t*

pulse check in, 10, 118

recognition of, 112–113

reversible causes (Hs and Ts) of, 113–117

rhythm check in, 118–119

rhythms, 112–113

Cardiac arrest in pregnancy, 120

code card for, 123

Cardiac Chain of Survival, 6–7

In-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival, 6

Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Chain of Survival, 6–7

Cardiac conduction system, 96

Cardiac monitoring

five-electrode system, 34

three-electrode system, 34

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), 6–12, 17–20,

117–119

- compression-to-ventilation ratio in, 10
- coordinated team response and, 71–72
- monitoring effectiveness of, 8–9
- principles of high-quality, 7–8
- technique for, 8
- CCF. *See* Chest compression fraction
- Chest compression fraction (CCF), 9, 157
- Chest compressions
  - compression-to-ventilation ratio, 10, 20
  - depth of, 7
  - minimizing interruptions to, 7–8, 30, 36, 70
  - technique, 7
- Chest radiograph
  - use in acute coronary syndromes, 138, 139
  - use in verifying advanced airway placement, 128*t*
- Cincinnati Prehospital Stroke Scale (CPSS), 147, 147*t*
- Circulation, assessment of, 78
- Code cards
  - Adult Acute Coronary Syndromes, 141–142
  - Adult Acute Stroke, 151–152
  - Adult Bradycardia, 108
  - Adult Cardiac Arrest, 122
  - Adult Post-Cardiac Arrest Care, 130–132
  - Adult Suspected or Known Opioid Toxicity, 94
  - Adult Systematic Assessment, 81
  - Basic Life Support: Adults and Adolescents, 13–14
  - Cardiac Arrest in Pregnancy, 123–124
- Communication
  - essential components of, 69
  - with team, 3, 65, 69–70
  - with family members, 70
- Coronary angiography, 128, 139
- Coronary perfusion pressure (CPP), 7, 157
- Continuous quality improvement, 8
- Corrected QT interval (QTc), 96, 103, 157
- CPP. *See* Coronary perfusion pressure
- CPR. *See* Cardiopulmonary resuscitation
- CPSS. *See* Cincinnati Prehospital Stroke Scale
- Crew resource management, 72, 157
- Critical thinking, 3, 70, 157
- Debriefing, 8, 70, 73
- Defibrillation, 6, 36–38, 53–54, 118
  - energy doses for, 38, 53–54, 118
  - indications for, 37
  - pad placement for, 36, 53–54
  - technique, 36–38, 53–54, 118
  - with AED, 6
- Disability, assessment of, 77–78, 81, 148
- ECG tracing, 96–97
  - approach to interpreting, 97
  - waveforms and intervals of, 96–97
- ECPR. *See* extracorporeal cardiopulmonary resuscitation
- Electrocardiography, 35–36, 50–52, 80
  - 12-lead ECG, 35–36, 50–52, 80
  - 15-lead ECG, 35–36, 50–52
- End-tidal carbon dioxide, 9, 78, 88
  - expected values in low perfusion states, 9
  - expected values in normal perfusion states, 9
  - expected values in post-cardiac arrest, 9
  - for confirming adequacy of ventilation, 78
  - in respiratory distress, 88
  - in respiratory failure, 89
- Endovascular therapy, 144–145, 150, 151
  - indications for, 150, 151
  - timing for, 144, 151
- Exposure, assessment of, 78
- Extracorporeal cardiopulmonary resuscitation (ECPR), 119, 157
- Feedback devices, 9
- Fibrillatory waves, 102, 157
- Fibrinolytic therapy, 134–135, 142, 144–146, 149–150, 152
  - for treatment of myocardial infarction, 134–135, 142
  - for treatment of stroke, 144–145, 149, 151
    - eligibility criteria for, 151
    - indications for, 145, 151–152
    - timing for, 144–145, 151–152
- First-degree atrioventricular (AV) block, 98–99
- Fluid therapy, 39–40, 42–43*t*
  - in post-cardiac arrest care, 39, 40–43*t*
  - indications for, 39
  - solutions used for, 40–43*t*
- Glucose (blood levels of), 128*t*, 151, 149, 145, 151
  - in stroke, 149, 150, 151
  - post-cardiac arrest, 128*t*, 130
- Glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitors, 43*t*, 140*b*
- HEART score, 138, 140
- Hemodynamic compromise, signs of, 103, 104, 106, 108–109
- Hemorrhage, subarachnoid, 144, 149*b*, 152, 159
- Heparin, 43*t*, 140*b*, 142
- Intraosseous access, 38–39, 59–65
- Intravenous (IV) access, 38
- Ischemia/reperfusion response, 126, 158
- IV access. *See* Intravenous access
- J point, 96–97
- MAP. *See* Mean arterial pressure
- Mean arterial pressure (MAP), 127
- MI. *See* Myocardial infarction
- Morphine, 43*t*, 139, 141
- Myocardial infarction (MI), 117, 122, 127, 130, 134
- Naloxone, 93, 94
- Nasopharyngeal airway (NPA), 26, 27
  - indications for, 26
  - placement of, 26, 46–47
- National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS), 78, 147, 153–155
- NIHSS. *See* National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale
- Nitroglycerin
  - intravenous, 140*b*, 142
  - sublingual, 139

- Non-ST-segment elevation ACS (NSTEMI-ACS), 134, 137, 141–142
  - high-risk NSTEMI-ACS, 137
  - intermediate- or low-risk NSTEMI-ACS, 137
- Nonshockable rhythm, 117–118, 124
- Normal sinus rhythm, 97
- NPA. *See* nasopharyngeal airway
- NSTEMI-ACS. *See* Non-ST-segment elevation ACS
- OPA. *See* oropharyngeal airway
- Opioid overdose, 92–93, 94
  - recognition of, 92, 94
  - treatment of, 92–93, 94
- Oropharyngeal airway (OPA), 26, 44–45
- Oxygen delivery devices, 32, 33*t*
- Oxygen-hemoglobin dissociation curve, 86, 158
- Oxygen therapy, 32
  - bag-valve-mask resuscitator (BVM), 32, 33*t*
  - nasal cannula, 32, 33*t*
  - non-rebreather mask, 32, 33*t*
  - simple oxygen face mask, 32, 33*t*
  
- P wave, 96, 97
- P2Y<sub>12</sub> platelet receptor inhibitors, 43*t*, 140*b*, 141, 142
- PCI. *See* Percutaneous coronary intervention
- PEA. *See* Pulseless electrical activity
- Percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), 134–135, 139–140, 158
  - indications for, 134
  - primary, 140
  - timing for, 135
- Phased response approach, 72–73, 158
- Pneumothorax, 92*b*, 137*b*
  - differential diagnosis for ACS, 92*b*
- Post-cardiac arrest care, 125–131, 127*t*, 128*t*
  - code card for, 130
  - identifying and treating myocardial infarction, 128
  - management of hemodynamics in, 127
  - optimization of ventilation and oxygenation in, 126–127
  - promoting neurologic recovery, 128–129
- Post-cardiac arrest prognostication, 129
- Post-cardiac arrest syndrome, 126
- PR interval, 96, 97
- Primary assessment, 77–78, 81, 91, 104, 137, 148
  - goals for, 77–78
- Problem solving, 3, 70
- Procainamide, 107
- Pulmonary embolism, 92*b*, 115*t*, 117
  - recognition of, 117
  - treatment of, 117
- Pulse oximetry, 32
- Pulseless electrical activity (PEA), 112–113, 122, 158
  - recognition of, 112–113
  - treatment for, 122
  - underlying causes of, 112
  
- QRS complex, 96, 97, 103, 106–107
- QT interval, 96, 97
- QTc. *See* Corrected QT interval
- Rapid assessment, 10, 15–16, 76–77, 81, 91, 104, 137
  - goals of, 76
  - technique for, 15–16, 77
- Rapid response team, 6, 10, 68, 73, 158
  - criteria for calling, 68
  - goals for, 68
- Reperfusion therapy, 127–128, 134, 135, 139
- Respiratory arrest, 10, 11, 69, 83, 88–92, 114*t*, 159
  - recognition of, 92
  - treatment of, 69, 88–92
- Respiratory distress, 68, 77, 83, 88–92, 114*t*, 117, 159
  - signs and symptoms of, 68, 88–92
- Respiratory failure, 83, 88–92, 114*t*, 159
  - signs and symptoms of, 89, 91
  - types of, 89
- Resuscitation team, 6, 9, 10, 25, 68–73
  - goals for, 68–73
  - team member responsibilities, 69–73
  - team member roles, 69–73
- Return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC), 2, 6, 7, 9, 20, 73, 114, 117–119, 125–127, 130
  - minimum arterial diastolic pressure for, 9
  - minimum CPP for, 7
  - recognition of, 73
- ROSC. *See* Return of spontaneous circulation
  
- SAMPLE mnemonic, 79
- Second-degree atrioventricular (AV) block type I, 99
- Second-degree atrioventricular (AV) block type II, 100
- Secondary assessment, 76, 77, 79, 91–92, 104, 137, 148–149
  - components of, 76, 77, 91–92, 104, 137–138, 148–149
  - goals of, 76, 91, 104, 137, 148–149
- Serum cardiac markers, 80, 92, 128*t*, 135, 137, 138, 139, 140
  - indications for, 137
  - timing for, 137
- Shockable rhythm, 54, 117–119
- Shout-tap-shout sequence, 10, 15
- Sinus bradycardia, 98
- Sinus tachycardia, 101, 106
- Skill sheets
  - AED Use for Adults, 21–23
  - CPR for Adults, 17–20
  - Inserting a Nasopharyngeal Airway, 46–47
  - Inserting an Oropharyngeal Airway, 44–45
  - Intraosseous Access (Drill), 59–62
  - Intraosseous Access (Manual Insertion), 63–65
  - Manual Defibrillation, 53–54
  - Placing Electrodes for Electrocardiography, 50–52
  - Rapid Assessment for Adults, 15–16
  - Synchronized Cardioversion, 55–56
  - Transcutaneous Pacing, 57–58
  - Using a Bag-Valve-Mask Resuscitator—One Provider, 48
  - Using a Bag-Valve-Mask Resuscitator—Two Providers, 49
- Sotalol, 43*t*, 107
- STEMI. *See* ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction
- STEMI Chain of Survival, 135

- ST segment, 96-97
  - ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI), 134-136, 139-140
    - recognition of, 135
    - treatment for, 135, 139-140
  - Stroke, 143, 144, 147
    - Acute Stroke Chain of Survival, 144-145
    - code card for, 151-152
    - embolic, 144, 157
    - fibrinolytic therapy, 144, 150, 157
      - eligibility criteria for, 150
    - hemorrhagic, 144, 149, 157
      - intracerebral hemorrhage, 144, 158
    - ischemic, 144, 149-150, 158
    - mimics, 148, 148*b*
    - recommended diagnostic tests for patients with
      - suspected acute, 149*b*
    - stroke care facilities, 146*b*
    - thrombotic, 144, 159
  - Suctioning, 26
  - Supraventricular tachycardia, 101-102, 106
  - Synchronized cardioversion, 37-38
    - indications for, 37*t*
  
  - T wave, 96
  - Tachyarrhythmia, 101
    - approach to patient with, 105-107
    - code card for, 109
    - narrow complex, 101
    - wide complex, 101
  - Targeted temperature management (TTM), 128, 159
  - Teamwork, 3, 159
    - critical skills for, 69-70
    - importance of, 67
  - Tension pneumothorax, 116
    - as a cause of cardiac arrest, 115*t*
    - as a complication of BVM use, 31
  - Third-degree atrioventricular (AV) block, 100
  - Torsades de pointes, 103
  - Transcutaneous pacing, 38
    - indications for, 38
    - technique for, 57-58
  - TTM. See Targeted temperature management
  
  - Ultrasonography, in cardiac arrest, 114, 128*t*
  
  - Vagal maneuvers
    - indications for, 106
    - methods of performing, 107*t*
  - Vasopressor therapy, 127*t*
  - Ventilation-perfusion mismatch, 87-88, 159
  - Ventricular fibrillation, 112
  - Ventricular rate, calculation of, 97
  - Ventricular tachycardia, 102-103
    - monomorphic ventricular tachycardia, 158
      - 12-lead ECG criteria, 103, 104
      - causes of, 100, 103
      - clinical signs of, 103
      - treatment of, 36-37, 106-107
    - polymorphic ventricular tachycardia, 158
      - 12-lead ECG criteria, 103, 104
  - causes of, 100, 104
  - clinical signs of, 102
  - treatment of, 104-105
- pulseless ventricular tachycardia
  - 12-lead ECG criteria, 112
  - causes of, 112
  - clinical signs of, 112
  - treatment of, 117-119



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