

Gunshot Wound Treatment Guidelines Handout

Gunshot wounds are critical medical emergencies that require immediate attention. This handout provides essential guidelines for managing gunshot injuries effectively. Gunshot wounds can lead to severe complications, including rapid blood loss, infection, and shock. Prompt medical intervention is crucial to stabilize the injured person and prevent further harm.

Gunshot wound treatment guidelines

Immediate action

1. **Ensure scene safety:**

Before approaching the patient, ensure the scene is safe for both the patient and healthcare professionals. Avoid entering potentially dangerous areas until they are secured by law enforcement.

2. **Call for emergency assistance:**

Immediately call emergency medical services (EMS) if not already done. Provide them with detailed information about the location and condition of the patient.

3. **Initial assessment:**

Quickly assess the patient's airway, breathing, and circulation (the ABCs). Address any life-threatening issues immediately.

Basic life support

1. **Control severe bleeding:**

Direct pressure should be applied to the wound using sterile gauze or dressings. If bleeding is not controlled, apply a tourniquet proximal to the wound site.

2. **Ensure airway patency:**

If the patient is unconscious but breathing, maintain an open airway using the head-tilt, chin-lift maneuver or jaw-thrust method. Be prepared to provide artificial ventilation if necessary.

3. **Administer oxygen:**

If available, administer high-flow oxygen via a non-rebreather mask to ensure adequate oxygenation, especially if the patient exhibits signs of shock or respiratory distress.

Advanced life support

1. **Establish intravenous (IV) access:**

Begin fluid resuscitation by inserting a large-bore IV line and administering crystalloid solutions (e.g., normal saline or lactated Ringer's). Monitor for signs of hypovolemic shock.

2. Wound management:

Inspect the wound for entry and exit points. Do not attempt to remove any embedded objects, as this may cause further damage. Cover wounds with sterile dressings.

3. Pain management:

Administer appropriate analgesics to manage pain, following protocols for dosage and administration.

Continuous monitoring and transport

1. Monitor vital signs:

Continuously monitor the patient's vital signs, including heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate, and oxygen saturation. Regularly reassess and document any changes in the patient's condition.

2. Prepare for transport:

Ensure the patient is stabilized as much as possible before transport. Communicate with the receiving facility, providing them with detailed information about the patient's injuries and current status.

3. Document and report:

Document all care provided, including time of injury, treatments administered, and patient's response to interventions. Provide a thorough report to the receiving medical team upon arrival.

Infection prevention

1. Aseptic technique:

Use aseptic technique when handling wounds and administering medication to minimize the risk of infection.

2. Antibiotic prophylaxis:

Administer antibiotics as per protocol to prevent infection, particularly in open wounds and when surgical intervention is anticipated.