

Response to Wilderness Medical Emergencies

CHECKLIST

The order of these actions varies with the circumstances of the accident. Use the checklist only as a supplement to training in the Wilderness First Aid Course.

Scene and Safety Survey:

- Note your first impression.
- Determine cause of the accident and resulting Mode of Injury (MOI).
- Count victims.
- Identify and protect from hazards in reaching the scene.
- Identify and protect from environmental and infection hazards on-scene.

Primary Survey-Identify and treat life threatening conditions:

If MOI suggests neck/back injury, immobilize c-spine.

- Establish the level of responsiveness.
 - If unresponsive—establish and maintain airway.
 - Check for breathing and pulse. Provide rescue breathing and chest compressions as needed
- Identify bleeding on, around and beneath the patient. Investigate all areas wet with blood and control serious bleeding.

Establish a relationship and get consent of a conscious patient (while performing Primary Survey)

- Introduce yourself and state your qualifications.
- Ask the patient's name and determine adult/minor status.
- Assess LOC as Alert/ Verbal Response/ Pain Response/ Unresponsive (AVPU).
- Ask the patient's permission to help.
- Ask "What happened?"
- Assess LOC as Alert and Oriented to Person/Place/Time/Situation.
- Begin recording patient information.

Secondary Survey-Examine the patient:

- Ask "What hurts?" (main complaint).
- Address the patient's main complaint.
- Protect the patient from heat and cold.
- Delay splinting and wound care until after the secondary survey.

Take and record initial set of vital signs;

- Level of consciousness.
- Pulse (rate and quality).
- Breathing (rate and quality).
- Skin vitals (color, temperature, moisture).
- If a head injury is the concern, check MOPS with each vital sign check:
 - MOPS (memory, orientation, pupils, strength and sensation).

Perform a head-to-toe exam. See the Head-to-Toe Exam Checklist for details

Record the patient's medical history (SAMPLE):

- Signs and symptoms. What are they?
- Allergies. Does the patient have any?
- Medications. Is the patient on any? How about recreational drugs and/or alcohol (72 hours)?
- Past medical history. Anything significant?
- Last meal. When and what foods and liquids?
- Events. What happened right before the injury or illness?

Repeat vital signs:

- Every 15 minutes for 1 hour, then every 30 minutes for 2 hours, then every hour until stable.
- With any change in patient condition.

Treat Injuries:

- Improvise splints and wrap wounds.
 - Apply Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation (RICE) for sprains and strains.

Conduct a Wilderness Spinal Injury Check:

- Is the patient alert, oriented, and without pain?
- Does the patient have normal sensation and motion in all extremities?
- Palpate the neck and back while asking if it hurts.
- Can the patient touch his chin to his chest and to each shoulder and raise his chin without pain?

Perform the following at any time:

Treat any condition that can cause patient death or disability

Remove patient to safe and comfortable location

- Maintain c-spine precautions.
- Straighten the arms and legs: untwist the torso.

Select target body position and reposition patient

- Flat (and level) on patient's back unless otherwise indicated.
- Nausea/impending vomiting, unconscious patient, drainage from mouth-on the side.
- Shortness of breath or rib/lung damage-sitting up.
- Shock-legs elevated or head slightly downhill.
- Head injury-head slightly elevated.

CHECKLIST: Head to Toe Exam

Use the checklist only as a supplement to training in the Wilderness First Aid Course

Head:

- Kneel at the patient's chest.
- Run your fingers over the head, feeling for soft spots, depressions and blood. Finish at the base of the skull.
- Check the eyes: Do both eyes follow your finger up, down, left, right?
- Check the ears and nose for fluid drainage. Check behind the ears for bruising.
- Run your fingers over face, starting at forehead, then nose, cheeks and chin.
- Have patient open mouth; check for loose teeth and blood.
- Have patient bite teeth together; check jaw alignment.
- Feel spine from base of skull to shoulders.

Neck:

- Check alignment of trachea. Is it midline (lying in a straight line between chin and sternum)?

Chest:

- Press on the clavicle, one side at a time.
- Press down on the sternum.
- Squeeze the rib cage together (barrel hoop test).
- Ask patient to take a deep breath. Squeeze rib cage together again.

Abdomen:

- Locate the navel. Using the flats of the fingers (not your fingertips) of your hands, press gently down on the four quadrants.
- Feel for rigidity. Assess for pain response, look for bruising.

Pelvis:

- Press downward on the pelvic girdle.
- Squeeze inward on the pelvic girdle.

Legs:

- Place your hands around patient's thigh. Start high at the pelvis and groin and move hands down each leg until you reach the ankle.
- Remove both boots and socks and feel each ankle and foot for pain response.
- Ask patient to push both feet, at the same time, against your hands like gas pedals.
- Ask patient to pull toes toward chin, pull feet inward toward each other, and push feet out checking for pain response.
- Separately, squeeze big or little toe on each foot. Can patient tell you which toe you are touching?
- Check capillary refill on one toe on each foot. Did circulation return in less than 2 seconds?

Arms:

- Start at shoulders and place your hand all the way around each arm, moving the entire length of the arm to the fingertips.
- Place two of your fingers in each of the patient's palms and ask them to squeeze. Are the squeezes of equal strength? Do they cause the patient any pain?
- Check capillary refill on each index finger. Did circulation return in less than 2 seconds?
- Squeeze little finger or thumb on each hand and ask patient to identify which finger you are squeezing.

Back:

- While kneeling at the chest, lift the shoulder closest to you just enough for you to slide your hand under until you can reach the spine.
- Feel the scapula (shoulder blade), rear of the rib cage, and the spine from the neck through the tail bone.
- Move to other side and repeat procedure.