

GENERAL TRIAGE GUIDELINES

1. All emergency care begins with the ABCs: make sure there is an open **A**irway, that the patient is **B**reathing, and that the patient has adequate **C**irculation.
 - A. Airway. Remove obstructions from the mouth, if necessary; move the tongue if it is obstructing the airway; and close any openings such as the nose that prevent the lungs from filling with air.
 - B. Breathing. Restore breathing by artificial resuscitation (a technique by which another person or device can temporarily provide air to a patient), or by administering oxygen, if necessary.
 - C. Circulation. Stop blood loss from serious wounds. Restore heartbeat by cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), if necessary. CPR is a technique in which another person temporarily provides air and heart contractions for a patient whose heart has stopped beating or is not pumping blood effectively.
2. Look at the patient, and assess his or her injuries. Immobilize any injuries to the neck. The patient may become paralyzed if you initiate any movement. Always suspect neck injuries when there is extensive injury to the head or face.
3. **Shock** is extremely serious and life threatening; it occurs when blood pressure drops so low that it no longer delivers adequate supplies of oxygen and nutrients to the tissues. Shock can result from failure of the heart to pump vigorously enough, from serious blood loss, or from a reduction of effective blood volume due to pooling in the capillaries or to dehydration.

Shock due to reduced blood volume can be treated by elevating the feet, by using pressure suits that force blood from the extremities back into the body core, or by infusing blood or saline solution into the circulatory system. Shock due to weakness of the heart or damage to the circulatory system may require medications or mechanical devices that assist circulation.
4. The hypothalamus normally controls internal body temperature. If this control is lost, the core body temperature can rise to dangerously high levels, a condition known as **hyperthermia**. Extreme hyperthermia can kill cells, particularly brain cells. In these cases, external measures must be taken, such as rubbing the patient with ice to bring the body temperature back within normal limits.

Conversely, the body can cool to dangerous levels, a condition known as **hypothermia**. Hypothermia can occur when people are cold and wet for a long period of time. Rapid evaporation of water can cool a person quite quickly, even if the air temperature is not extremely cold. In such cases, the body must be warmed slowly to bring it back within normal limits.