



# British Columbia Ambulance Service

## First Aid Tips: Brought to you by the BC Ambulance Service

### **Ambulance Emergencies**

Visit our 9-1-1 Response section for more information on Ambulance Emergencies.

### **Bleeding**

#### Action:

For external bleeding (when blood escapes from the surface wound and can be seen) remember RED:

- Rest patient
- Elevate wounded limb
- Direct pressure on wound

Do *not* apply a tourniquet

### **Broken Bones**

#### Signs and symptoms:

- Patient heard bone "snap"
- Deformity at the site of the fracture or pain at the site of the fracture
- Impaired movement of limb

#### Action: (serious fractures involving injuries to the body, neck or back)

- Call 9-1-1
- Do not move the patient
- Help the patient find a comfortable position
- Control bleeding if present

### **Burns**

Burns can be caused by fire, the sun, chemicals, heated objects or fluids, and electricity. They vary in severity and can range from minor problems to life-threatening emergencies. Distinguishing a minor burn from a more serious burn involves determining the degree of damage to the tissues of the body. If you are not sure how serious the burn is call 9-1-1.

First-degree burns are those in which only the outer layer of skin is burned. The skin is usually red and some swelling and pain may occur. Unless the burn involves large portions of the body, it can be treated at home.

Second-degree burns are those in which the first layer of skin has been burned through and the second layer of skin is also burned. In these burns, the skin reddens intensely and blisters develop. Severe pain and swelling also occur. If a second-degree burn is no larger than 2 or 3 inches in diameter, it can be treated at home. If the burn covers a larger area, call 9-1-1.



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Third-degree burns are the most serious and involve all layers of skin. Fat, nerves, muscles, and even bones may be affected. Areas may be charred black or appear a dry white. If nerve damage is substantial, there may be no pain at all. In these cases call 9-1-1 immediately.

Action: (Follow these steps when treating minor burns at home)

- Cover the area of the burn with clean, water moistened dressing
- Apply clean water to dressed burn, to cool, as required
- Never put any medication on the burn unless a doctor directs you to do so
- Do not use creams, lotions, butter, etc.

Action: (For major burns, call 9-1-1 and follow these steps until paramedics arrive)

- Do not remove any material stuck to the skin
- Cover the burned area with a cool, moist, sterile bandage or clean cloth
- Do not place any creams, ointments or ice on the burned area

### Choking

Signs and symptoms:

- Remember a choking patient cannot speak to you
- If the patient is coughing or can speak- do nothing
- If they cannot breath or speak to you, take action

Action (Adults):

- Reassure the patient
- For a conscious victim position yourself behind them and reach your arms around their waist.
- Place your fist, thumb side in, just above the victim's navel and grab the fist tightly with your other hand.
- Pull your fist abruptly upwards and inwards
- Repeat until the object is expelled

Action (Infants):

- Lay the infant face down, along your forearm, use your thigh/ lap for support
- Hold the infant's chest in your hand and jaw with your fingers
- Point the infant's head downward, lower than the body
- Give up to 5 quick, forceful blows between the infant's shoulder blades (using the heel of your free hand)

### Fire Emergencies

Fire emergency examples:

- Presence of smoke
- Presence of fire
- Presence of toxic fumes

Action:

- In British Columbia, call 9-1-1 for fire emergencies
- State which community you are calling from and provide your address



## Heart Attack

### Signs and symptoms:

- Chest pain or pressure
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Ashen skin colour
- Weakness
- Fear, anxiety and denial
- Remember a conscious heart attack patient can usually speak to you

### Action:

- Call 9-1-1
- Stay on the line
- Be prepared to answer questions about your location, the patient's condition
- Start CPR (BCAS dispatchers can provide CPR instruction over the phone)

## Poisoning

### Action:

- Do *not* induce vomiting unless you are certain of the poison and know the correct treatment.
- For information regarding poisons and appropriate first aid treatment call BC Poison Control Centre.
- The BC Poison Control Centre is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at 682-5050 (Lower Mainland) or 1-800-567-8911.
- If the person is unconscious, convulsing, or having trouble breathing or swallowing call 911 immediately

### Prevention:

Teach your children these symbols to prevent poisonings.



Poisonous



Flammable



Corrosive



Explosive

## Police Emergencies

### Police emergency examples:

- Crime in progress
- Suspicious person
- Child or elderly person missing
- Personal injury

### Action:

- In British Columbia, call 9-1-1 for police emergencies



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### Police assistance for non-emergency situations

- In British Columbia non-emergency situations requiring police aid (lost wallet, noisy party, etc.) call (604) 717-3321 for non-emergency help.

### **Seizures**

#### Signs and symptoms:

- Alternating contraction and relaxation of muscle groups
- Eye movements and turning of the head to the same side
- Speech arrest, vocalization
- Nausea, vomiting
- Sweating
- Rapid heart rate

#### Action:

- Do not attempt to restrain patient
- Do not attempt to force anything between the patient's teeth
- Beware of the possibility of the patient causing personal injury by striking surrounding objects, during the seizure (remove objects, if possible)
- When seizure is over place patient in the recovery position
- Call 9-1-1, if symptoms persist

### **Shock**

#### Signs and Symptoms:

- An extremely low blood pressure
- Fast, but weak pulse
- Dizziness, faintness or light-headedness
- Feeling weak or nauseous
- Moist, clammy skin
- Profuse sweating
- Unconsciousness
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Feeling anxious, agitated or confused
- Blue lips and fingernails

#### Action:

- Act immediately
- Keep patient lying down
- Reassure patient
- Elevate patient's legs
- Keep patient warm - avoid overheating
- Watch patient carefully
- Do *not* give the patient anything to drink - especially alcohol

### **Unconsciousness**

#### Actions:

- If a spinal injury is suspected, shout into patient's ear for response. Do not shake.



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- If a spinal injury is not suspected, shake shoulders and shout in ear for response.
- If there is no other response: look, listen, and feel for breathing

### If patient is not breathing:

- Open the airway, push forehead back and hold
- Clear out mouth, if necessary, with fingers;
- Remove dentures only if loose
- Give mouth to mouth resuscitation (one breath every five seconds)

### If patient is breathing:

- Place him or her in the recovery position to prevent choking