**Spinal and neck injury**

**IN A MEDICAL EMERGENCY CALL TRIPLE ZERO (000) FOR AN AMBULANCE.**

**DRSABCD**
- **Danger**
- **Response**
- **Send for help**
- **Airway**
- **Breathing**
- **CPR**
- **Defibrillation**

The DRSABCD Action Plan is the first step when providing first aid. Use this to assess the immediate situation.

**WARNING**
- If the patient is unconscious as a result of a head injury, you should always suspect a spinal injury.
- **DO NOT** move a patient with a suspected spinal injury unless they are in danger. Movement may cause further injury.
- Twisting, compressing or bending an injured spine may increase the damage. If the patient must be moved, take extreme care to keep the spine straight and avoid twisting or bending. Where the neck is involved, support the head and neck with your hands.
- Do not apply a cervical collar.

**SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**
- Pain at or below the site of the injury
- Tenderness over the site of the injury
- Absent or altered sensation below the site of the injury, such as tingling in hands or feet
- Loss of movement or impaired movement below the site of the injury

**WHAT TO DO**

**UNCONSCIOUS BREATHING PATIENT**
1. Follow DRSABCD.
2. Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
3. Place the patient in the recovery position. Carefully support their head and neck, and avoid twisting or bending during movement.
4. Ensure the patient’s airway is clear and open.
5. Hold the patient’s head and neck steady to prevent twisting or bending of the spine.

**CONSCIOUS PATIENT**
1. Follow DRSABCD.
2. Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
3. Keep the patient in the position found. Only move if in danger.
4. Reassure the patient. Ask them not to move.
5. Loosen any tight clothing.
6. Hold the head and neck steady to prevent twisting or bending of the spine.

**WARNING**
- If the patient is unconscious as a result of a head injury, you should always suspect a spinal injury.
- **DO NOT** move a patient with a suspected spinal injury unless they are in danger. Movement may cause further injury.
- Twisting, compressing or bending an injured spine may increase the damage. If the patient must be moved, take extreme care to keep the spine straight and avoid twisting or bending. Where the neck is involved, support the head and neck with your hands.
- Do not apply a cervical collar.

**SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**
- Pain at or below the site of the injury
- Tenderness over the site of the injury
- Absent or altered sensation below the site of the injury, such as tingling in hands or feet
- Loss of movement or impaired movement below the site of the injury

**YOU COULD SAVE A LIFE WITH FIRST AID TRAINING**

[www.stjohn.org.au](http://www.stjohn.org.au) • 1300 360 455

© St John Ambulance Australia Inc. 2018. St John first aid protocols are for the Australian market only. All care has been taken in preparing the information but St John takes no responsibility for its use by other parties or individuals. This information is not a substitute for first aid training. St John recommends attending first aid training courses. Not for commercial distribution.