



First aid fact sheet

Severe bleeding



- Bleeding should be managed as severe and life-threatening if it cannot be controlled by firm, direct and continuous pressure, and/or there are signs of shock.
- If it is obvious that severe and life-threatening bleeding is present, controlling bleeding before the Airway and Breathing can be life-saving. Send for help early by calling **Triple Zero (000)**.

Signs and symptoms

As well as the obvious sign of blood coming from a wound, signs and symptoms of severe bleeding include:

- weak, rapid pulse
- pale, cool, moist skin
- pallor, sweating
- rapid, gasping breathing
- restlessness
- nausea
- thirst
- faintness, dizziness or confusion
- loss of consciousness

Examples of severe and life-threatening bleeding include the following situations:

- an amputated or partially amputated limb above the wrist or ankle
- shark attack, propeller cuts
- or similar major trauma to any part of the body.

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Apply gloves if available. Help the patient to lie down. Remove or cut the patient's clothing to expose the wound.
- 3 Apply firm, direct and continuous pressure on the bleeding wound initially with your hands until the bleeding stops. The patient or a bystander can do this.
- 4 When available, apply a pad or dressing in or directly over the wound and apply firm, direct and continuous pressure until the bleeding stops.
 - If an object is embedded in or protruding from a wound, apply pressure on either side of the wound and place pads around the object before bandaging.
- 5 Once bleeding is controlled secure the pad by bandaging firmly, ensuring the pad remains directly over the wound. Observe for any further bleeding.
- 6 Continue to check the patient's vital signs (consciousness, breathing and pulse) and look for recurrence of bleeding. Do not give the patient anything to eat or drink.
- 7 If the bleeding is not controlled and:
 - the bleeding is on a limb, apply an arterial tourniquet (if available) and tightened until the bleeding stops. Advise the patient that this will cause pain.
 - the bleeding is not on a limb, remove existing dressings and apply a haemostatic dressing (if available) in or directly over the wound and apply firm, direct and continuous pressure until the bleeding stops.
- 8 Call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance.

In a medical emergency call Triple Zero (000)

DRSABCD Danger ▶ Response ▶ Send for help ▶ Airway ▶ Breathing ▶ CPR ▶ Defibrillation

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