



AUSTRALIAN RESUSCITATION COUNCIL

GUIDELINE 9.2.3

SHOCK

INTRODUCTION

Shock is a loss of effective circulation resulting in impaired tissue oxygen and nutrient delivery¹ and causes life threatening organ failure.

SOME CONDITIONS WHICH MAY CAUSE SHOCK²

Loss of circulating blood volume (hypovolaemic shock), e.g:

- severe bleeding
- major or multiple fractures or major trauma
- severe burns or scalds
- severe diarrhoea and vomiting
- severe sweating and dehydration.

Cardiac causes (cardiogenic shock), e.g:

- heart attack

Abnormal dilation of blood vessels (distributive shock), e.g:

- severe infection
- allergic reactions
- severe brain / spinal injuries

Blockage of blood flow in or out of heart (obstructive shock) eg:

- tension pneumothorax
- cardiac tamponade
- pulmonary embolus

RECOGNITION

The symptoms, signs and rate of onset of shock will vary widely depending on the nature and severity of the underlying cause³. Shock is a condition that may be difficult to identify.

Symptoms may include:

- dizziness
- muscle weakness
- thirst
- anxiety
- restlessness
- nausea
- shortness of breath
- feeling cold.

Signs may include:

- collapse
- cool, sweaty skin that may appear pale
- rapid breathing
- confusion and deterioration of the level of consciousness
- rapid pulse which may become weak or slow
- vomiting.

MANAGEMENT

- Control bleeding with direct pressure.
- Call an ambulance. (Dial Triple Zero - 000).
- If unconscious manage as per the ARC Basic Life Support flow chart.
- Rest the victim in a position of comfort ideally lying down.
- Provide oxygen if available.
- Maintain body temperature.
- Provide reassurance.

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE

Consensus Expert Opinion

CLASS OF RECOMMENDATION

Class A - Recommended

FURTHER READING

ARC Guideline 3 Unconsciousness

ARC Guideline 8 Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

ARC Guideline 9.1.1 Principles of Control of Bleeding for First Aiders

ARC Guideline 9.1.5 Harness Suspension Trauma – First Aid Management

REFERENCES

1. Skinner, B. & Joans, M. (2007). Causes and Management of Shock. *Anesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine*. **8**(12): 520-524.
2. Graham, C.A. & Parke, T.R. (2005). Critical care in the emergency department: shock and circulatory support. *Emergency Medicine Journal*. **22**:17-21.
3. Moore, F.A., McKinley, B.A. & Moore, E.E. (2004). The next generation in shock resuscitation. *The Lancet* **363**:1988-96.