

You Are the Emergency Medical Responder

Your police unit responds to a call in a part of town plagued by violence. When you arrive, you find the scene is empty except for a young woman lying on the sidewalk. After sizing up the scene and approaching the young woman, you notice that she has been shot and is bleeding profusely.

What is your immediate concern?

Chest Injuries

- Open chest wounds
 - Object penetrates the chest wall
 - Fractured ribs break through the skin

- Closed chest wounds
 - Generally due to a blunt object

Types of Chest Injuries

- Blunt trauma
- Traumatic asphyxia
- Rib fractures
- Flail chest (Paradoxical Breathing)
- Pneumothorax
- Hemothorax
- Tension pneumothorax

Blunt Trauma: Signs and Symptoms

- Severe shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Rapid, possibly irregular pulse

Traumatic Asphyxia: Signs and Symptoms

- Shock
- Distended neck veins (JVD)
- Cyanosis
- Subconjunctival hemorrhage (Red Eye)
- Black eyes
- Petechiae on the head and neck
- Rounded, “moon-like” facial appearance
- Bleeding from the nose or ear
- Coughing up or vomiting blood
- Loss of consciousness, seizures or blindness

Broken Ribs:

Signs and Symptoms

- Leaning toward side of fracture
- Hand or arm pressing over injured area
- Shallow breathing

Flail Chest:

Signs and Symptoms

- Flail chest or paradoxical breathing is a life-threatening medical condition that occurs when a segment of the rib cage breaks under extreme stress and becomes detached from the rest of the chest wall.
- Symptoms
 - Same as for fractured ribs
 - More severe, difficulty breathing
 - Signs and symptoms of shock

Flail Chest



Pneumothorax: Signs and Symptoms

- The presence of air or gas in the cavity between the lungs and the chest wall, causing collapse of the lung.
- Symptoms
 - Pain while breathing
 - Pain at the site (rib fracture)
 - Decreased breath sounds
 - Possible signs of hemorrhage or shock

Hemothorax:

Signs and Symptoms

- Hemothorax is a collection of blood in the space between the chest wall and the lung (the pleural cavity).
- Symptoms
 - Pain
 - Shortness of breath
 - Decreased breath sounds
 - Dullness
 - Possible signs of shock
 - Abnormal or unstable blood pressure (if massive)

Tension Pneumothorax: Signs and Symptoms

- The accumulation of air under pressure in the pleural space. An imminent danger is that the lung will collapse under the pressure.
- Symptoms
 - Respiratory distress
 - Decreased or absent breath sounds
 - Trachea shifting away from side of injury
 - Unstable blood pressure (low)

Chest Injuries:

Signs and Symptoms

- Difficulty breathing, including shortness of breath and pain when breathing (especially deep breathing)
- Pain at the site of the injury
- Obvious deformity
- Pale or bluish skin
- Coughing up blood
- Protruding neck veins
- Drop in blood pressure

Sucking Chest Wound: Care

- Cover with an occlusive dressing, taping it in place on all sides except for one side that should remain loose.
- Use a folded cloth or, as a last resort, a gloved hand if occlusive dressing not available.
- Administer emergency oxygen, if available, and take steps to minimize shock.
- Have patient sit or lie in a comfortable position if no spinal injury is suspected.

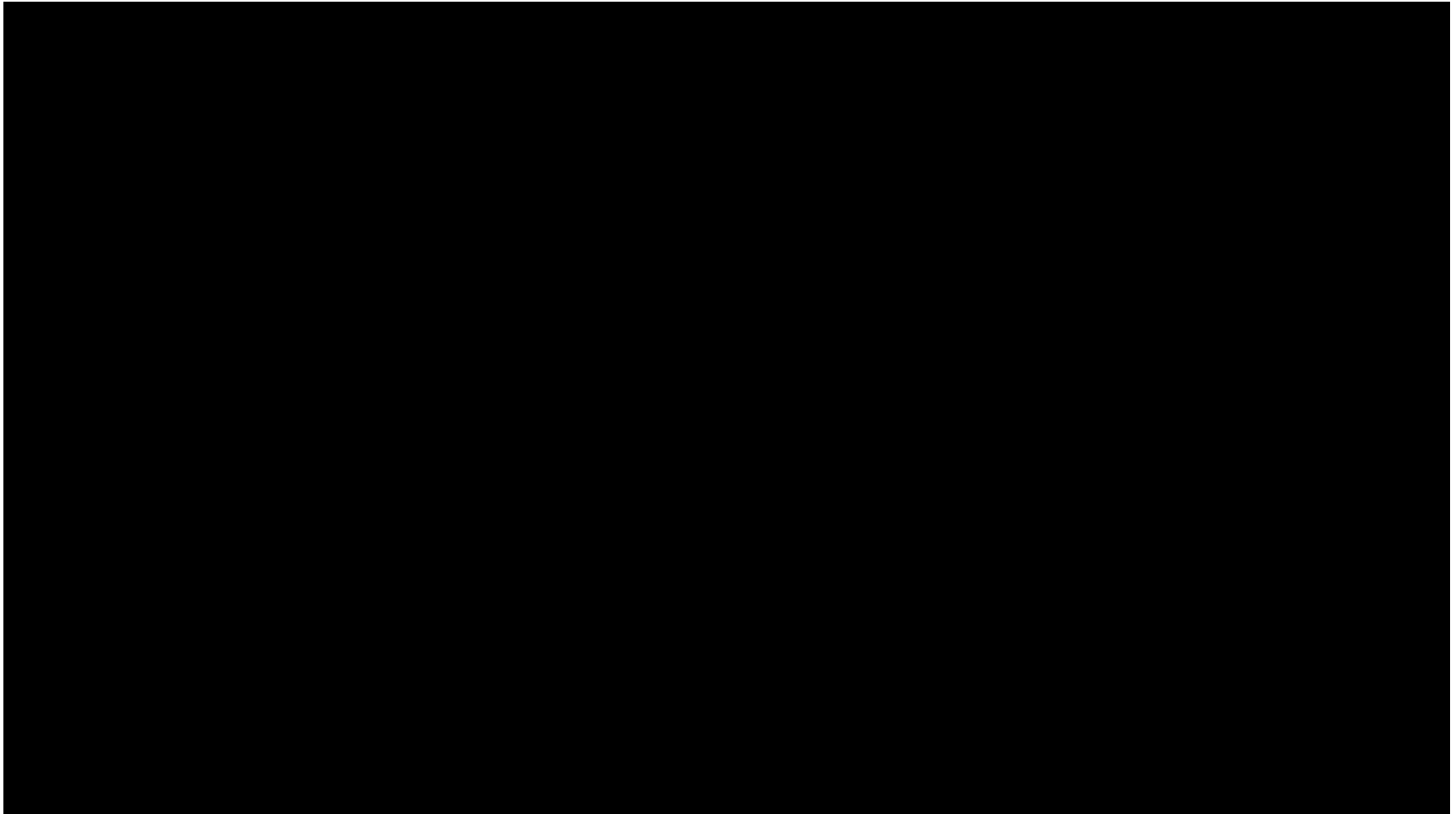
Sucking Chest Wound



Sucking Chest Wound



Treating a Sucking Chest Wound



Impaled Object in the Chest: Care

- *Never* remove the object unless it interferes with chest compressions.
- Stabilize the object to prevent further damage.
- Remove clothing to expose the wound.
- Control bleeding by applying direct pressure to the edges of the wound; avoid direct pressure on the object.
- Use a sterile, bulky dressing to help hold the object in place, carefully packing the dressing around the object.
- Secure the sterile bulky dressing in place with gauze, a cravat or tape.

Activity

You arrive at a nearby athletic field where an adult softball league is practicing. One of the players was hit in the chest by a line drive with a softball. The impact knocked the player to the ground. The player is alert but complaining of severe pain on the left side of her chest. You notice her leaning toward the left side and breathing shallowly.

Types of Abdominal Injuries

- Abdominal injuries are either open or closed.
- Open injuries include lacerations, abrasions, punctures, evisceration or disembowelment.
- Closed injuries include contusions and gastrointestinal bleeding.

Abdominal Injuries: Signs and Symptoms

- Severe pain
- Tenderness or swollen feeling in the abdominal area
- Bruising
- External bleeding
- Nausea and vomiting
- Pale, ashen, cool or moist skin
- Weakness
- Thirst
- Protruding organs

Closed Abdominal Injury: Care

- Carefully position the patient on the back.
- Avoid applying direct pressure.
- Bend his or her knees slightly.
- Administer emergency oxygen, if available.
- Take steps to minimize shock.
- Summon more advanced medical personnel.

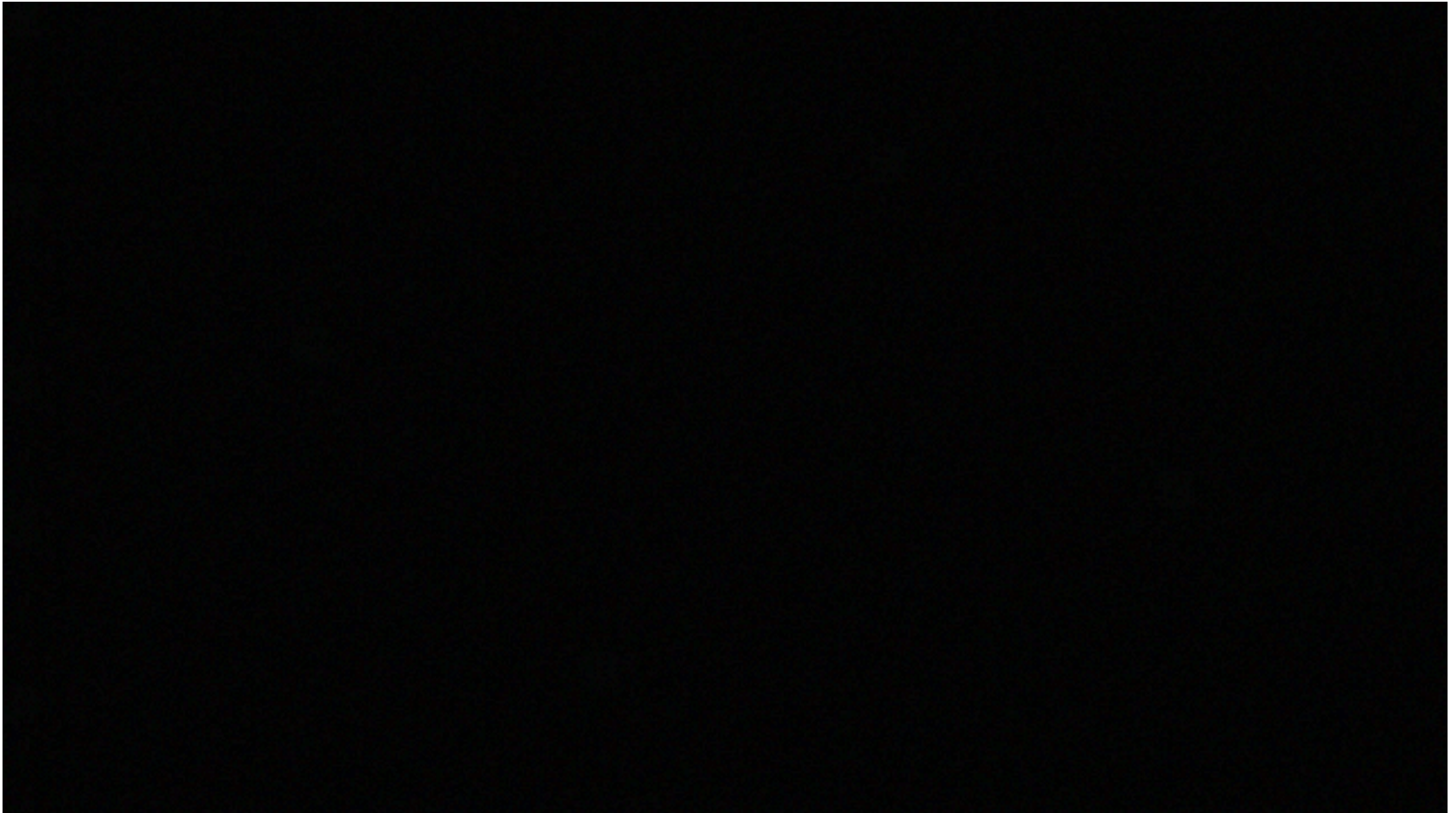
Open Abdominal Injury: Care

- Summon more advanced medical personnel.
- Carefully position the patient on the back.
- Avoid direct pressure and pushing the organs back inside the patient's body.
- Remove clothing from around the wound.
- Apply moist (warm tap water can be used), sterile or clean dressings loosely over the wound.

Open Abdominal Injury: Care (cont'd)

- Cover the dressings loosely with plastic wrap, if available.
- Cover the dressings lightly with a folded towel to maintain warmth.
- Keep the patient from getting chilled or overheated.
- Administer emergency oxygen, if available.
- Stabilize any object impaled in the abdomen.

Abdominal Evisceration



Genital Injuries: Care

- Male (to the penis)
 - Wrap penis in soft, sterile saline-moistened dressing
 - If an open wound, apply sterile dressing and direct pressure
 - Apply cold compress
- Female
 - Control bleeding with saline-moistened dressings
 - Use a diaper-like dressing for the wound
 - Apply ice packs over dressing

You Are the Emergency Medical Responder

As you begin your assessment, you notice that the young woman has multiple gunshot wounds to her chest and abdomen.

What do you do first?