



First Aid Treatment for Fractures and Shock

Fractures

A break or crack in a bone is called a fracture. In the case of an open fracture, the broken bone may pierce the skin surface. But in a closed fracture the skin around the fracture is intact. However, broken bones may be unstable causing internal bleeding and the casualty may develop shock.

Signs and symptoms. Look for:

- Deformity, swelling and bruising around the fracture.
- Pain and/or difficulty moving the area.
- A limb may look shorter, twisted or bent.
- A grating noise or feeling from the ends of the broken bones.
- Difficulty or being unable to move the limb normally.
- A wound where you can see the bone sticking out (known as an open fracture).
- Signs of shock, particularly with a fracture of a thigh bone, hip or pelvis.

What to do

1. If it is an open fracture, cover the wound with a sterile dressing. Apply pressure around the wound and not over the protruding bone, to control any bleeding. Then secure the dressing with a bandage.
2. Advise the casualty to keep still while you support the injured part to stop it from moving. Do this by holding the joint above and below the injured area.
3. Place padding around the injury for extra support.
4. Once you've done this, call 999 or 112 for emergency help. Do not move the casualty unless they are in immediate danger. You can secure an upper limb fracture with a sling.
5. If necessary treat for shock, but do not raise an injured leg. Monitor their breathing and level of response while waiting for help to arrive.

Your aim is to prevent movement at the injury site and arrange removal to hospital.

Shock is a life-threatening condition. It happens when the body isn't getting enough oxygen to the vital organs.

Signs and symptoms. Look for:

- Pale, blue/grey skin, which may be cold and clammy.
- Sweating.
- Fast, weak pulse.
- Fast, shallow breathing.
- Feelings of nausea and thirst.

What to do

1. First, treat any cause of shock that you can see.
2. Then help the casualty to lie down. Raise the casualty's legs (do not raise an injured leg) this will help to improve the blood supply to their vital organs. If available, lay them down on a foil blanket then cover them with another foil blanket. Call 999 or 112 for emergency help and tell ambulance control you think they are in shock. If possible, explain what you think caused it.
3. Remember, fear and pain can make shock worse by increasing the body's demand for oxygen, so try to reassure the casualty and keep them calm.
4. Monitor their level of response.

Your aim is to improve the blood supply to the brain, heart & lungs and arrange removal to hospital.

For further information on first aid at QMUL please visit <http://www.hsd.qmul.ac.uk/a-z/first-aid/>