

BLS Tourniquet Application

Indications

- A. Hemorrhage from extremities refractory to direct pressure, elevation, and splinting and proximal artery compression.
- B. Massive and life threatening hemorrhage in a setting where risk of brisk exsanguination makes application of less aggressive methods impractical.

Equipment

- A. CAT Tourniquet or SOFT-T tourniquet are the approved devices (per TCCC)
- B. If an approved tourniquet is not available, a blood pressure cuff inflated to a pressure sufficient to stop bleeding may be used, though it is not ideal.

Procedure

- A. First attempt direct pressure. If a discreet bleeding vessel can be identified, point pressure over the bleeding vessel is more effective than a large bandage and diffuse pressure.
- B. If a tourniquet is indicated, apply 2-4 inches proximal to the injury site (or per device instructions) and NEVER across a joint.
- C. Be sure to cut away any clothing so that the tourniquet is clearly visible. NEVER obscure a tourniquet with clothing or a bandage.
- D. Apply the tourniquet tightly to the limb assuring there is no slack in the device.
- E. Tighten windless rod or tensioning device until distal bleeding is stopped. Note: Capillary "oozing" may continue after bleeding is controlled.
- F. Secure windless rod in place for positive bleeding control.
- G. Document time and location of tourniquet. In addition, mark the time of application on the patient's skin next to the tourniquet.
- H. Reassess every 2-3 min for additional bleeding, tighten or apply a second tourniquet if bleeding is not controlled with the first.

Specific Precautions

- A. A tourniquet applied too loosely will only increase blood loss by inhibiting venous return.
- B. Applying a tourniquet can cause nerve and tissue damage, whether applied correctly or not. Therefore proper patient selection is of the utmost importance.
- C. Injury due to tourniquet placement is unlikely if removed within 1 hour. In cases of life threatening bleeding, benefit outweighs theoretical risk.