

DARTMOUTH DENTAL PRACTICE

24 Victoria Road
Dartmouth
Devon

Marian Roberts BDS (Sheffield) GDC 61688
Stephen Pepperrell BDS (London) GDC 54967

TQ6 9SA
01803 835418

admin@dartmouthdental.co.uk www.dartmouthdental.co.uk



Medical Emergencies Procedure (a copy of this procedure to be kept in each surgery)

What is an emergency?

An emergency is a critical or life-threatening situation.

To help you decide what a critical situation is; here are some examples:

- unconsciousness,
- a suspected stroke,
- heavy blood loss,
- suspected broken bones,
- a deep wound such as a stab wound,
- a suspected heart attack (heart attack happens when there is a blockage in one of the arteries in the heart.),
- difficulty in breathing,
- severe burns,
- severe allergic reaction.

There are a few things that you should remember in any emergency. These will help you to deal with the situation quickly and efficiently.

- Stay calm, shout for help. The Dentist or Dental Nurse is the most likely person who will be close by to immediately assist. You may need to instruct someone to telephone 999. This is likely to be the receptionist. Make sure they know where the ambulance has to come to, and they have some details about the person who is injured or ill.
- Don't put yourself in danger. For example, if someone has been electrocuted, make sure you switch off the power supply before touching them.
- Do everything you can to help the person.
- Don't give the person anything to eat, drink or smoke.
- Don't stick anything in their mouth.
- Follow the instructions the ambulance service call handler may give you.

The way to help a person very often depends on what is wrong with them. Sometimes, the quickest way to help is to take the person to the nearest accident and emergency department. There is a minor injury unit at Dartmouth Hospital. The nearest accident and emergency department is at Torbay Hospital. However, you should call an ambulance and not move the patient if:

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- you think they may have hurt their back or neck, or have any other injury that may be made worse by moving them,
- the person is in shock (shock is a short-term state of body weakness that usually happens after an accident of injury, caused when there is an insufficient supply of oxygen to the body.) and needs your constant attention, or
- the person has severe chest pain or difficulty breathing.

The recovery position

If the patient is unconscious, there is a safe position to put them in which allows them to breathe easily and stops them choking on any vomit. However, you must first carefully consider whether there is any chance that the casualty has hurt their back or neck, or has an injury that would be made worse by moving them. Putting them in the recovery position in this case could have serious consequences. If you are in any doubt, and the casualty is in no further danger by being left in their original position, do not move them. Wait for the paramedics to arrive.

How to put someone in the recovery position

Once you have checked that they are breathing normally, lie them on one side, with a cushion at their back, bring their knee forward, and point their head downward to allow any vomit to escape without them swallowing it or breathing it in. Remember, when you are moving the patient onto their side, make sure their neck and back are well supported.