

Tourniquet and Wound-Packing: What You Need to Know about Stopping a Severe Bleed

1. A person can bleed out in a few minutes, so expeditious emergency treatment is key.
2. If someone else is available to call 9-1-1, direct them to do so. If not, deal with the wound before calling for help. The need to stop the bleed is that urgent.
3. Tourniquets are applied only to extremities (arms and legs). The easiest and most effective tourniquet to use is a CAT, which stands for Combat Application Tourniquet.
 - a. No harm to a body will be done within 2 hours of applying the tourniquet.
 - b. After 2 hours, there may be nerve damage and after 6 hours, amputation is likely.However, preventing someone from bleeding to death is the greater priority.
4. Wounds on the torso cannot be treated using a tourniquet; you must pack the wound, hopefully with hemostatic (blood flow stopping) gauze or, if none is available, any clothing. (See 7 below)
5. If applying a tourniquet, here are some rules:
 - a. Get it on *immediately* (no more than 15-20 seconds).
 - b. Insert the extremity in the tourniquet loop. Place the loop 2-3" above the wound.
 - c. Then, tighten the strap. You shouldn't be able to insert a finger under the tightened strap.
 - d. Turn the windless rod on either direction until the bleeding stops. It will hurt, but keep tightening the windlass until blood flow stops.
 - e. When the blood flow stops, insert the windlass into the windlass clip and run the surplus amount of tightening strap over the windlass in the windlass clip.
 - f. Place the white time strap across the windlass clip; write down the time applied.
 - g. If you cannot get the bleeding to stop, place a second tourniquet 1-2" above the first.
 - h. Once applied, never loosen the tourniquet to see if the wound has stopped bleeding.*
6. If you do not have a tourniquet:
 - a. You can make one with a piece of rope, a shoelace, a scarf or a handkerchief tied in a knot. Insert a stick or some straight device between the wound and the circular piece of clothing and twist the stick until the cloth is wrapped tightly around the extremity.
 - b. If you don't have the above equipment, exert pressure on the wound (see 7.c. below). It may take 10 minutes for the bleeding to stop. Once you've applied pressure, don't check to see if the bleeding has stopped. Keep the pressure on.
7. If the wound is on the torso, you must pack the wound, either with blood-clotting hemostatic gauze (e.g., Quik Clot, combat gauze, Celox, Celox-Rapid, ChitoGauze are available at Wal-Mart and other large retailers or on the Web), or if none is available, any cloth. Don't worry if the cloth isn't clean. The patient can be given antibiotics after his or her life is saved.
 - a. Use your fingers to work the gauze or cloth deeply into the wound.
 - b. The material must be in direct contact with the veins and arteries that have been severed.
 - c. Take any excess cloth and exert direct pressure on it. Place the palm of one hand over the cloth and place the palm of your other hand on the back of the first. Press down with all your body weight.
8. Expect to get blood on you. Responding medics will provide assistance and medical guidance.
9. Only professional medical personnel at a hospital can do anything about internal hemorrhaging.
10. You may not be successful in your efforts to save a life, but your training gives you the ability to save a life. In any event, you are protected by the Good Samaritan law.