



First Aid Response

Care of the Unconscious Patient





Learning Outcomes

Knowledge Objectives (by the end of this Unit, you will be able to...)

1. List the common causes of an altered level of consciousness
2. Describe the difference between each of the 'AVPU' levels
3. List the main signs and symptoms of concussion and outline the reason for on-going observation post injury
4. List the main signs and symptoms of (cerebral) compression
5. Describe the management of a head injured patient
6. Describe the management of a suspected spinal injury
7. List steps to care for the general well-being of an unconscious patient



Learning Outcomes

Attitudinal Objectives (by the end of this Unit, you will be able to...)

1. Demonstrate an ability to empathise with patients who may not appear to be fully conscious in a non-judgemental and compassionate manner
2. Demonstrate an ability to respond to the needs of patients showing appreciation for the effects of pain and fear

Skills Objectives (by the end of this Unit, you will be able to...)

1. Demonstrate how to assess a patient's conscious level
2. Demonstrate how to examine a patient's head
3. Demonstrate how to manage a patient's airway using the head tilt/chin lift
4. Demonstrate how to provide advice to a patient with a suspected spinal injury
5. Demonstrate how to care for an unconscious patient's general wellbeing



Topics

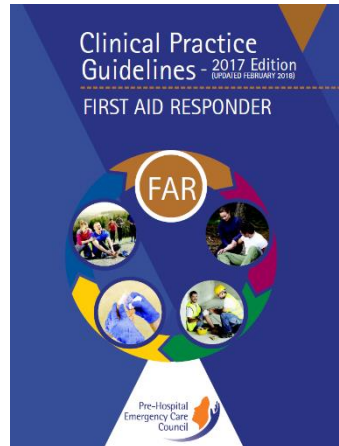
1. Altered Level of Consciousness (ALOC)
2. AVPU Scale
3. The Nervous System
4. Concussion & Compression
5. Care Management for Head Injury
6. Head/Neck/Spinal Immobilisation
7. Care Management for Unconscious Patient



Resources?



Health Service
Executive





Altered Level of Consciousness

- Interruption or alteration of a person's mental state
- Defined as any level of response in a patient other than normal





Altered Level of Consciousness

- Causes
 - Substance abuse
 - Alcohol
 - Epilepsy
 - Shock
 - Low blood sugar
 - Stroke
 - Lack of oxygen to the brain
 - Trauma





Measuring ALOC

- **Alert** – is the patient alert?*
- **Voice** – do you have to raise your voice to get response from patient?
- **Pain** – does the patient only respond to a pain stimulus?
- **Unresponsive** – is the patient completely unresponsive?



LET'S RECAP...

****Only 'Alert' state is NORMAL!****



Unconsciousness

- Unconsciousness is when a person is unable to respond to people or other stimuli and appear to be asleep

Alert???

Aware of where they are??

AVPU Scale

A	The patient is awake.
V	The patient responds to verbal stimulation.
P	The patient responds to painful stimulation.
U	The patient is completely unresponsive.

Only ALERT state is NORMAL!

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Causes of Unconsciousness

- Fainting
- Shock
- Head Injury
- Poisoning
- Epilepsy
- Diabetes
- Asphyxia
- Stroke
- Heart Attack
- Hypothermia
- Drug overdose
- Alcohol poisoning
- Severe blood loss
- Car Accident





Treatment for Unconsciousness

How do we treat an Unconscious patient?

- A – Open Airway
- B – Check Breathing
- C – Check Circulation
- AVPU
- Observe Vital Signs
- Reassure the patient

**Life Threatening Conditions –
call 112 (or 999) immediately!**

AVPU Scale

A	The patient is awake.
V	The patient responds to verbal stimulation.
P	The patient responds to painful stimulation.
U	The patient is completely unresponsive.

Only ALERT state is NORMAL!

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The Nervous System

Watch out for:

CNS?

PNS?



Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lh4pdaWYu7A>



Functions of Nervous System

- Information centre
- Voluntary & Involuntary movements
- Two Parts – Central & Peripheral
- Central – Brain & Spinal Cord
- Peripheral – nerves which connect to CNS





Concussion v Compression

Watch out for:

John Hayes (former Irish rugby player) in a clash of heads



Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OgRrQH3E6s>



Concussion v Compression

Watch out for:

**Gen Davis (NBA basketball player)
takes a blow to the head**



Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6K3PIgX8c3g>



Concussion v Compression

NFL's concussion crisis



Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnAmddi52Y8>



Concussion v Compression

Concussion – Sudden Onset

Signs & Symptoms

- Temporary loss of consciousness
- Dizziness
- Nausea & Vomiting
- Headache
- Rapid Pulse
- Skin – clammy & cold
- Confusion

Compression – Slow Onset

Signs & Symptoms

- Severe Headache
- Slow & Noisy Breathing
- Dilation of one/both pupils
- High Temperature
- Weakness or Paralysis
- Irritable & disoriented
- Drowsiness
- Slow, Strong Pulse



Concussion v Compression

Concussion

Treatment

- Referred to Hospital
- Recovery Position
- Monitor Vital Signs
- Regain consciousness
– remember AVPU
- Reassure patient

Compression

Treatment

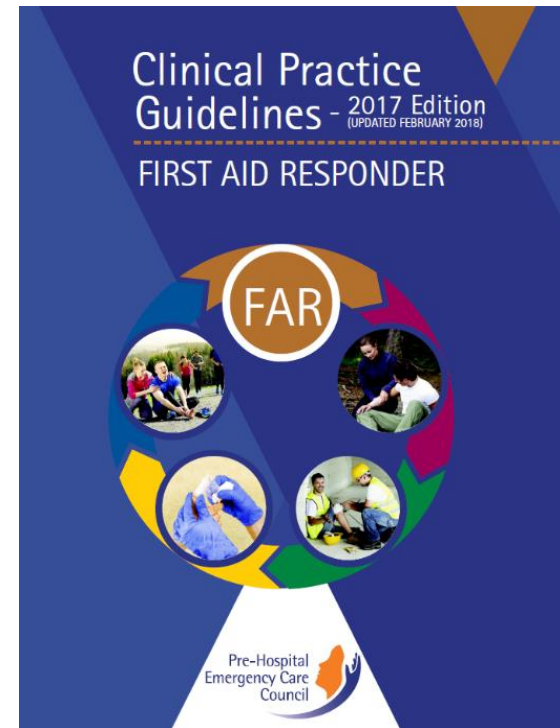
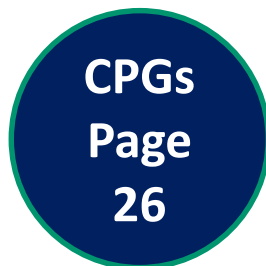
- Call 112 (or 999)
- Recovery Position
- Monitor Vital Signs
- Reassure patient



PHECC CPGs

- FAR CPGs (2017)

ALoC





Management of a Head Injury

How do we treat a head injured patient?

- Sit patient down
- Ice pack
- Treat wound (if bleeding)
- Assess responsiveness – AVPU
- 112 (or 999) if needed



What if they fall unconscious?

ABC's, Vital Signs, Reassure, 112 (or 999)





Management of a Head Injury

What if we suspect Trauma to the head?

- 112/999 immediately
- Immobilise head/neck/spine
- Head, Neck & Spine in straight line!
- Reassurance



Remember:

- Empathy
- Compassion
- Calm & Caring Approach
- Understanding of patient's pain & fear





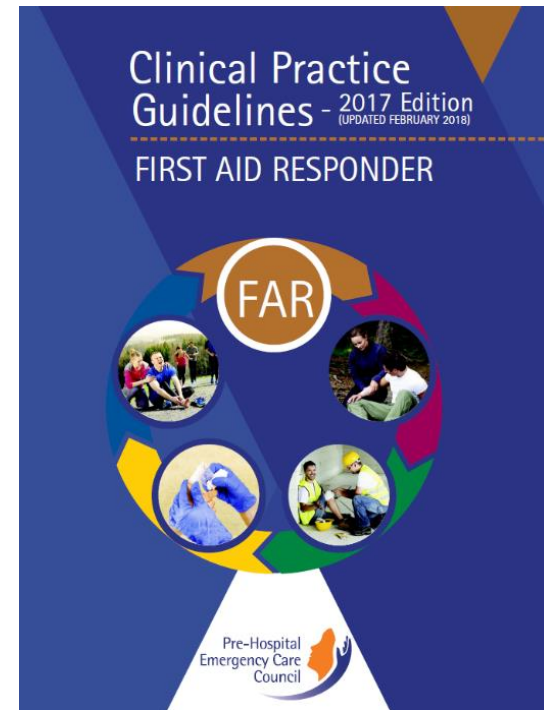
PHECC CPGs

Spinal Injury Management

- FAR CPGs (2017)

Spinal Injury Management

CPGs
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Assessment

- List the common causes of an altered level of consciousness
- Describe the difference between each of the 'AVPU' levels
- List the main signs and symptoms of concussion and outline the reason for on-going observation post injury
- List the main signs and symptoms of (cerebral) compression
- Describe the management of a head injured patient
- List key points in head/neck/spinal immobilisation
- List steps to care for the general well-being of an unconscious patient



Summary

- Altered Level of Consciousness (ALOC)
- AVPU Scale
- The Nervous System
- Concussion & Compression
- Care Management for Head Injury
- Head/Neck/Spinal Immobilisation
- Care Management for Unconscious Patient