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Acute haemorrhage, secondary to trauma, is the major cause of hypovolaemic shock. However, non-haemorrhagic causes of hypovolaemic shock must also be considered, that is, gastro-intestinal (GI) losses, environmental exposure and neglect.

Blood loss can be ‘hidden’ and not immediately apparent, for example pelvic injury, ruptured ectopic pregnancy, GI haemorrhage or intracranial bleeding in small children.

Awareness of the clinical features of shock is of paramount importance, as early recognition of hypovolaemia can be life-saving. Assessment of volume status extends beyond the vital signs and requires a comprehensive review of the patient. "Treat the patient, not the vital signs."[1]

The pre-hospital measurement of external blood loss is inherently inaccurate,[2,3,4] however an indicative estimate must be recorded on the eARF to aid patient care considerations.

### Clinical features

#### Blood loss

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Signs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>- Minimal or no tachycardic response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Blood pressure changes do not usually occur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–30%</td>
<td>- Tachycardia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hypotension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Peripheral hypoperfusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ALOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 40%</td>
<td>- Haemodynamic compensation at its limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Decompensation imminent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt; 2 L)</td>
<td>- ALOC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other clinical features

- **CVS:**
  - pale, cool peripheries, with or without being clammy
  - tachycardia > 100 bpm or bradycardia < 60 bpm
  - decreased pulses peripherally
  - capillary refill > 3 seconds
  - SBP < 100 mmHg

**NOTE:** Older people may not be tachycardic. Fit/young patients may have normal vital signs and yet be very volume depleted.[3]

- **NEURO:**
  - ALOC
    - initially quiet with decreased alertness
    - confusion/agitation
    - obtundation (mental blunting)

**NOTE:** Be cautious interpreting ALOC as being due to substance misuse or alcohol.

Hypotension in trauma patients may not be secondary to haemorrhage – consider other causes (e.g. obstructive shock (tension pneumothorax tamponade), spinal cord injuries, or toxins.)
Note: Officers are only to perform procedures for which they have received specific training and authorisation by the QAS.