Clinical Practice Guidelines:
Resuscitation/Resuscitation – Special circumstances

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<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
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Resuscitation – Special circumstances

While the vast majority of cardiac arrests are appropriately managed with standard basic and advanced life support, a limited number of situations require additional treatment and procedures. This CPG outlines the treatments and procedures that should be considered during resuscitation in special circumstances.

Asthma or COPD

- Ventilation in reactive airways can be difficult.
- Positive pressure ventilation can trigger further bronchoconstriction and complications such as breath stacking. This is caused by incomplete expiration, air-trapping and build-up of positive end-expiratory pressure (intrinsic or auto-PEEP). [1]
- Reduce the respiratory rate, smaller tidal volume and prolonged expiratory time:
  - adult: 6 – 8 per minute
  - paediatric: 8 – 15 per minute
- Use largest ETT appropriate to decrease airway resistance.
- Permissive hypercapnia is usually well tolerated by patients. [2,3]
- For asthmatics in cardiac arrest, when ventilation is difficult, consider the potential of tension pneumothorax and treat as appropriate.

Hypothermia

- The lack of signs of life in a hypothermic patient, cannot reliably be used for recording life extinct.
- As the body temperature decreases, sinus bradycardia tends to give way to atrial fibrillation, followed by VF and then asystole. [4]
- Withhold adrenaline (epinephrine) and other resuscitation drugs until the patient has been warmed to a temperature higher than approximately 30°C. [2]
- Once the patient has reached 30°C the standard interval between drug administrations should be doubled. [2]
- Once the patient has a temperature over 35°C, normal drug administration intervals should be used. [2]
- If the patient temperature is < 30°C:
  - If VF/VT is present give a DCCS at the maximum energy setting.
  - If after three DCCS VF/VT persists, delay further DCCS until patient’s temperature is above 30°C.

Pacemaker/Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) insitu

- When treating an adult with a permanent pacemaker or an ICD insitu, the defibrillation pads should be placed on the chest wall ideally ≥ 8 cm, from the generator position.
- The anterior-posterior and anterior-lateral defibrillation pad placements are both considered acceptable.
- If an unconscious patient has an ICD in-situ, but VF or VT persists, external DCCS(s) should be delivered.

Decompression illness

- When ventilation is difficult, consider the potential for tension pneumothorax and treat as appropriate.
- Following ROSC, continue high flow oxygen and provide rapid transportation to a definitive care facility with hyperbaric unit if available.
**Morbid obesity**

- Early activation of additional resources for extrication
- Potential airway management difficulties

**Paramedic witnessed cardiac arrest of suspected cardiac aetiology**

- When a paramedic witnesses the cardiac arrest of a monitored, well-oxygenated adult patient, and the cardiac arrest is suspected to be of cardiac aetiology, the focus of management is on delivering early defibrillation.
- If the initial ECG rhythm is VF or pulseless VT, up to three successive (stacked) shocks should be delivered prior to commencing compressions, unless a delay of greater than 20 seconds is expected.
- Rapidly check the monitor for a rhythm change after each defibrillation attempt.
- If a delay to delivering initial defibrillation is expected to be greater than 20 seconds, commence compressions and at the earliest opportunity deliver a single shock (if indicated) without waiting to complete a 2-minute CPR cycle.
- After the initial defibrillation shocks, if the patient remains in VF or pulseless VT, further defibrillation shocks should follow a single shock protocol, with 2 minutes of CPR between shocks.
- If ROSC is attained for greater than 2 minutes, and then the patient suffers another witnessed VF or pulseless VT arrest, up to three successive (stacked) shocks should be delivered.
- If the patient remains in a shockable rhythm, paramedics should call the QAS Clinical Consultation and Advice Line for further case specific management guidance.

**Pregnancy**

- There are two patients – mother and foetus. The best hope for foetal survival is maternal survival.[1]
- Position mother to relieve aortocaval compression (after approx 20 weeks gestation) by moving the gravid uterus to patient’s left hand side.[2] If this is not possible or successful, tilt patient 30° to the left, supporting pelvis and thorax.
- A higher hand position may be required for chest compressions to overcome elevation of the diaphragm and abdominal contents due to the gravid uterus.[5]
- Intubation should be attempted as soon as possible to overcome increased intra-abdominal pressure and ensure adequate ventilation.
- Due to potential airway oedema, consider using an ETT that is 0.5–1 mm smaller than usual.[2]

**Tracheostomy patients**[6]

- Ventilation through the stoma is achieved by attaching the BVM directly onto the tracheostomy tube if compatible, otherwise consider using a neonate face mask to create a seal over the stoma. An alternative is to consider placing a LMA with inflated cuff over the stoma to achieve a seal. Occlude the mouth and nose if upper airway leaks found.
- If an air leak from the upper airway is present whilst ventilating through the stoma, upper airway techniques and adjuncts can be attempted to minimise further damage or complication of the lower airway. Occlude the stoma when ventilating via the upper airway.
- Do not remove the tracheostomy tube, if in situ, if ventilation is possible.