Electrical Shock

What is it?

> Injury to the body from direct contact with a high-voltage source.

The danger from an electrical shock depends on:

- Voltage
- Length of time in contact with the source
- Overall health
- Electricity's path through your body
- Type of current (an alternating current is often more harmful than a direct current)

Symptoms:

- Loss of consciousness
- Muscle spasms
- Numbness or tingling
- Breathing problems
- Headache

- Problems with vision or hearing
- Burns
- Seizures
- Irregular heartbeat

Plan of Action:

Caution:

- Don't touch an injured person who is still in contact with an electrical current.
- Call 911 or your local emergency number if the source of the burn is a high-voltage wire or lightning. Don't get near high-voltage wires until the power is turned off. Overhead power lines usually aren't insulated. Stay at least 20 feet (about 6 meters) away — farther if wires are jumping and sparking.
- Don't move a person with an electrical injury unless there is immediate danger.

When to seek emergency care:

Call 911 or your local emergency number if the injured person experiences:

- Severe burns
- Confusion

- Difficulty breathing
- Heart rhythm problems
- Cardiac arrest
- Muscle pain and contractions
- Seizures
- Loss of consciousness

Take these actions immediately while waiting for medical help:

- Turn off the source of electricity, if possible. If not, use a dry, nonconducting object made of cardboard, plastic or wood to move the source away from you and the injured person.
- Begin CPR if the person shows no signs of circulation, such as breathing, coughing or movement.
- Try to prevent the injured person from becoming chilled.
- Apply a bandage. Cover any burned areas with a sterile gauze bandage, if available, or a clean cloth. Don't use a blanket or towel, because loose fibers can stick to the burns.

> A person who has been injured by contact with electricity should be seen by a health care provider.

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