

TOOLBOX TALK #9

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES – PART 2 SHOCK AND FAINTING

Every second counts when responding to emergency medical situations. Recognizing the signs and symptoms – and knowing how to properly respond until help arrives – is vital. Staying calm, being prepared and knowing what to do, including when to call 911, can help save a coworker's life.

Here are some common medical emergencies – and what bystanders should do. (In each situation listed, know that you should be ready to administer CPR at a moment's notice.)

Shock

Someone experiencing shock may exhibit some of these symptoms:

- Anxiety, confusion, agitation or restlessness
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Cool, clammy or sweating skin
- Skin that's pale, bluish or ashen
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Thirst, nausea or vomiting



If any of these signs are present after an injury, sudden illness, or traumatic event, it may indicate the person's body isn't getting enough blood flow – a serious medical emergency. Call 911 immediately if shock is suspected. Then:

- Lay the worker down and elevate their legs and feet slightly, unless you think this may cause pain or further injury.
- Keep the person still.
- Loosen any tight-fitting and, if needed, cover the person with a blanket to warm them.
- If the person vomits or is bleeding from the mouth – and no spinal injury is suspected – turn the person onto their side to prevent choking.

Fainting

A worker may be about to faint if they're dizzy or feeling weak, are experiencing changes in their vision, have pale or ashen skin, or begin sweating a lot. If they do faint, lay them down, elevate their legs about 12 inches, loosen their clothing, provide fresh air and monitor them.

The general rule of thumb with fainting victims is to call 911 if someone hasn't regained consciousness after about a minute – unless they may have been injured during the faint. In that case, call 911 immediately.