

Lessons from
STOP THE BLEED

A free course on responding to emergencies

From accidents to altercations, learn how to help!

BLEED BASICS

1. Assess environment:

Has the danger passed? Can you safely approach?

2. Calm:

If needed, take a moment to get grounded. Get your head on straight so you can think clearly. Being -- or at least, seeming -- calm will help the injured person be calm and prevent exacerbating their injuries.

3. Direct pressure:

The more targeted/direct the pressure, the more effective in stopping bleeding. Use any absorbent material* and a bandage as described in the next section.

Note: with a larger wound it can be tough to tell where bleeding originates. Use any cloth to wipe the area and clear collected blood, to allow you a clearer view.*

4. Elevation:

Keep the wound above the person's heart.

- For arm/hand injuries, drape the arm over the head.
- For leg/foot injuries, sit or lay the person down, and prop the leg up.
- For torso/head injuries, lay the person down.

DRESSING A WOUND

For active bleeding on a limb/extremity, a pressure dressing is necessary.

Materials:

- Small amount of gauze, a cotton ball, or other absorbent cloth.*

**Note: despite what many of us have heard, sterility is not important at this time. Our concerns are absorbency and blood loss. Sterility comes later.*

- A long, preferably wide (≥ 4 ") elastic bandage. Substitute any similarly sized cloth, e.g. a lightweight scarf or strip of bedsheet.

- If your bandage material does not have a fastener built in (such as a strip of velcro), you will need to make your own. Duct tape is great, but any tape will do. No tape? Use a fabric cord such as a shoelace to tie around the finished dressing.

Steps:

- If needed, cut away clothing to expose the wound.

- Firmly press gauze/cloth on wound, and hold in place. If the gauze/cloth becomes saturated, place more material on TOP. Do NOT remove any soaked material, as it may be helping the wound to clot.

- Begin wrapping with your bandage. Wrap snug but not too tight.

Tip: each rotation, check for sensation and/or pulse further down the limb. Ask the injured person if they have pins and needles in their extremities. This is a sign that the wrapping is too tight. If the person is unconscious or unable to respond, press the base of their nail bed (on the corresponding hand or foot) firmly until it blanches (goes white), then release. Color should return within 2 seconds. If it doesn't, the wrapping is too tight.

- When there is a small amount of bandage left, twist the bandage 360° and position this twisted portion directly over the wound. Then use what's left to wrap at least once more all the way around. This adds additional pressure.

- Secure in place.

Congratulations! You just saved a life! Blood loss can become severe and life-threatening sooner than you might think. Take the injured person to the nearest medical professional for healing.

Stop the Bleed classes are held often and in many locations. They are brief (1.5 to 2 hours), free, and highly informative.

The lessons in this production were learned at a Stop the Bleed class presented by Asheville Street Medics, part of the Appalachian Medical Solidarity.