

## 6.5

# Tourniquet Application

### EMT/ADVANCED EMT/PARAMEDIC STANDING ORDERS– ADULT & PEDIATRIC

A tourniquet is a commercial device used to control a life threatening hemorrhage on an injured extremity to prevent exsanguination.

#### INDICATIONS:

Life threatening extremity hemorrhage that cannot be controlled by other means.  
Serious or life threatening extremity hemorrhage in the face of operational considerations that prevent the use of less aggressive hemorrhage control techniques.

#### PROCEDURE:

E/  
A/  
P

1. If hemorrhage is not severe, attempt to control the hemorrhage with direct pressure, bandaging and elevation.
2. With a commercial tourniquet:
  - Place tourniquet proximal to wound on the affected extremity.
  - Tighten per manufacturer instructions until hemorrhage stops and distal pulses are extinguished.
  - If initial tourniquet fails to stop bleeding, ensure proper deployment of first tourniquet, and consider placement of a second tourniquet just proximal to first.
  - Document time of tourniquet application and communicate this clearly with receiving facility.
  - Do not cover tourniquet.
  - Dress wounds per standard wound care and consider use of hemostatic bandage.
  - Reassess for rebleeding frequently, especially after any patient movement.
  - Proper tourniquet placement often causes significant pain. Consider pain management, see [Pain Protocol 2.17](#).
  - Do not remove or loosen tourniquet once hemostasis achieved.

In the absence of a commercial tourniquet (preferred), an improvised device e.g., cravat with windlass, blood pressure cuff could be used. The device must be a minimum of 2 inches wide, otherwise it can cut through the skin.

#### PEARLS:

- Do not apply tourniquets over clothing or joints. If wound is just distal to joint, the tourniquet should be placed just proximal to joint.
- Delay in placement of a tourniquet for life threatening hemorrhage significantly increases mortality. Do not wait for hemodynamic compromise to apply a tourniquet.
- Transport patients directly to a Level 1 or Level 2 trauma center if feasible and provide earliest possible notification / trauma alert.
- Damage to the limb from tourniquet application is unlikely if removed in several hours.

#### Tourniquet Reassessment Algorithm

