

## Upcoming Training & Meetings:

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2/1/2016	CPR/Code Review	7pm	Conway Fire Station
2/2/2016	CPR/Code Review	7pm	Daycreek FD
2/3/2016	CPR/Code Review	7pm	Alger FD
2/8/2016	CPR/Code Review	7pm	Allen Fire Station

## Patient Assessment and Documentation

Patient assessment is one of the most commonly used skills of the healthcare practitioner. The first step is always scene safety. After scene safety the provider should try to make a rapid determination of the severity of the patient's condition. Incorporated into the visual assessment of the patient is the evaluation of vital signs. The basic vital signs are blood pressure, pulse rate and quality and respiratory rate and quality. Vital signs are one piece of the patient assessment puzzle. The goal in patient assessment is to get as many pieces of the puzzle as possible.

**Blood Pressure** – Ideally the blood pressure should be auscultated to obtain a systolic and diastolic vs. palpated obtaining only a systolic reading. More pieces to the puzzle!

**Pulse Rate and Quality** – It is important to assess both the rate and quality of the pulse. The location where the pulse was taken should also be documented.

**Respiratory Rate and Effort** – The respiratory rate and effort must be assessed and documented.

The vital signs are a quick assessment and a basic tool to determine the level of medical intervention the patient requires. We frequently hear that the patient's vital signs are within "normal limits." Patients can have vital signs that fall within normal parameters and still require medical attention. The vital signs piece of the puzzle must be combined with other patient assessment information. There have been many patients who look good on a Patient Care Report (normal vital signs), but other pieces of the puzzle paint a very different picture. Do not fall into the trap of good vital signs if you think something else is going on. If you are a BLS provider and in doubt request ALS response if not already dispatched.

The rule of documentation for healthcare has been "If you didn't write it down, you didn't do it." It is important to take complete vital signs, and document all components of the patient assessment. There has been a recent trend of not documenting the respiratory rate. Please perform a thorough

assessment and document everything. You are part of a continuum of care, and other healthcare professionals may refer to your initial assessment and documentation.

It is also important to appreciate the medical legal aspects of patient care. The documentation should provide a comprehensive picture of everything that was done for the patient from initial contact to handing the patient off to a higher level of care. There are times when EMS responds to a request for service and the patient may refuse treatment and / or transport. On these events the need for documentation of a thorough assessment and complete set of vital signs is just as important as on the patient that receives treatment and transport. Complete documentation includes all times and position of the patient when vital signs were taken.

These are some general guidelines for “normal” vital signs for various age groups. The numbers may vary based on the medical reference that is being used.

<b>Patient Age</b>	<b>Pulse</b>	<b>Breathing</b>	<b>Systolic</b>	<b>Diastolic</b>
<b>Newborn</b>	90 - 180	30 - 60	50 - 70	30 - 53
<b>Infant (1 month to 1 year)</b>	100 - 160	25 - 30	75 - 95	50 - 70
<b>Toddler (1 to 3 Years)</b>	90 - 150	20 - 30	80 - 100	50 - 80
<b>Preschool (3 to 6 years)</b>	80 - 140	20 - 25	80 - 100	50 - 80
<b>School Age (6 to 12 years)</b>	70 - 120	15 - 20	80 - 110	60 - 90
<b>Adolescent (12 to 18 years)</b>	60 - 100	12 - 20	90 - 110	60 - 90
<b>Adults</b>	60 - 100	12 - 20	90 - 140	60 - 90

On vital signs when appropriate it is best to establish a baseline then a follow up set for comparison. Increased documentation can lead to a positive reflection of your management of the patient.

References:

American Heart Association Pediatric Advanced Life Support

AAOS Emergency Care and Transportation of the Sick and Injured Tenth Edition