

EMS Culture of Safety



Pea Ridge Fire Department EMS refresher

Introduction

- A paramedic's job is very gratifying but also very demanding.
 - The most important factor is your personal wellness and safety.
 - Scene safety issues
- Do not compromise your safety.
- Maintain your health from the beginning.

Introduction

- Data from NHTSA show an annual estimate of 1,500 ambulance crashes in the United States.
- New paramedics should be aware of their:
 - Own health and well-being
 - Limitations

Components of Well-Being

- Wellness is the quality or state of being in good health.
- Components of wellness.

Physical Well-Being

- Providers who are physically in shape:
 - Are less likely to become injured or ill
 - May heal more quickly if injured
 - Have a better quality of life

Physical Well-Being

- The American Heart Association's Simple 7 are factors that have been found to improve heart health.
 - Get active, control cholesterol, eat better, manage blood pressure, lose weight, reduce blood sugar, stop smoking

Nutrition

- Nutritional information changes regularly, but current nutritional guidelines are readily available.
- Consequences of poor nutrition.
- Eat foods in suggested portions from six main categories.
- Each person's requirements are different.

Nutrition

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Grains
- Protein foods
- Dairy or fortified soy products
- Oils

Nutrition

- Read nutrition labels of prepared or processed foods.
- Review:
 - Sodium levels
 - Amount and type of fat
 - Composition of carbohydrates

Nutrition

- Look for:
 - High-fiber content foods
- Beware of:
 - Fat-free products



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Nutrition

- Plan for your shift as if you will get minimal time to rest or to eat a meal.
 - What to bring
 - What to avoid

Weight Control

- The USDA's dietary guidelines recommendations.
- Make healthy food choices and avoid dieting.
- Gradual weight reduction is key.

Exercise

- Benefits of exercise.
- The exercise program for you depends on personal preferences and fitness goals.

Exercise

- Your exercise program should be targeted at maintaining or improving:
 - Cardiovascular endurance
 - Flexibility
 - Overall physical strength
- Consult your primary care physician before beginning an exercise program.

Exercise

- Adults should engage in 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.
- Attempt to reach your target heart rate.



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Smoking and Tobacco

- If you don't smoke, don't start!
- Everyone responds differently to smoke.
- Options for smoking cessation.
- Electronic cigarettes.

Alcohol Use

- Alcohol is a drug that can modify how the brain perceives stress.
 - Alcohol cannot alleviate stress.
 - The stress persists beyond the duration of the alcohol's effects.
 - Using alcohol to cope can lead to dependence.

Circadian Rhythms and Shift Work

- Your job as a paramedic will often conflict with your body's circadian rhythms.
- Ignoring your circadian rhythms can lead to several problems.
- Determine your natural rhythms.
- Tips for dealing with shift work.
- Do not overlook the need for sleep.

Periodic Health Risk Assessments

- Hereditary factors may affect your overall health.
- Consider researching your family history.
- Build health assessments into your routine physical checkups.

Body Mechanics

- A paramedic is required to lift and move a variety of patients.
- Develop the following habits:
 - Minimize the number of total body lifts you have to perform.
 - Coordinate every lift prior to performing the lift.
 - Minimize the total amount of weight you have to lift.

Body Mechanics



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- Habits (cont'd)
 - Never lift with your back.
 - Always lift with your legs!
 - Breathe

Body Mechanics

- Habits (cont'd)
 - Do not carry what you can put on wheels.
 - Ask for help.



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Mental Well-Being

- When you are subjected to stress, the fight-or-flight response is activated.
- A paramedic needs to be in control of his or her emotions.

Emotional Well-Being



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- Make a deliberate effort to create a healthy balance between your work and home life.

Spiritual Well-Being

- Human spirituality is an unseen dimension of human experience.
- Medical care supports the dignity and value of life and the sacredness of all people.

Disease Transmission

- Paramedics are called on to treat and transport patients with a variety of communicable and infectious diseases.
- Inform other health care providers who may come in contact with the patient.

Disease Transmission

- Infectious diseases can be transmitted in various ways:
 - Contact (direct or indirect)
 - Airborne
 - Foodborne
 - Vector-borne (insects or parasitic worms)

Protecting Yourself

- EMS follows standard precautions.
- Prevention begins with personal health.
 - Annual examinations
 - Immunizations

Personal Protective Equipment and Practices



- At a minimum, each ambulance should have:
 - Gloves
 - Facial protection
 - Gowns
 - N95 or N100 respirators

Personal Protective Equipment and Practices

- Important infection control practices:
 - Wear gloves.
 - Wash your hands.
 - Use hand lotion.
 - Use eye protection.
 - Consider wearing a mask.
 - Protect your body.



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Personal Protective Equipment and Practices



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- Infection control practices (cont'd):
 - N95 or N100 respirators
 - Clean your ambulance and equipment.
 - Properly dispose of sharps.
 - Consider wearing turnout gear.

Management of an Exposure

- Follow local EMS guidelines, such as:
 - Turn over care to another EMS provider.
 - Wash affected area immediately with soap and water.
 - If eyes were exposed, rinse them with water for at least 20 minutes as soon as possible.
 - Follow your department's infection control plan.
 - Comply with all reporting requirements.
 - Get a medical evaluation.
 - Document the incident.

Hostile Situations

- EMS should not arrive on scene first.
- Scrutinize all information.
- Ask for a police response to any suspicious call.

Hostile Situations

- Once in contact with a hostile patient:
 - Listen more and talk less.
 - Do not argue or ridicule.
 - Concentrate on deescalating emotions.
 - Be aware of the environment.
 - Show empathy.

Traffic Incidents



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- Primary concern is safety for yourself and those around you.
- It is important to stay aware of your surroundings, even the familiar ones.

Stress

- EMS is a high-stress job.
 - Understanding the causes of stress and how to deal with them is critical to your:
 - Job performance
 - Health
 - Interpersonal relationships

Stress

- You need to understand:
 - What stress is
 - Its physiologic effects
 - What you can do to minimize these effects
 - How to deal with stress on an emotional level

Stress

- Any event that causes us to react physically, emotionally, or mentally is considered stress.
- Stress is neither good nor bad.
 - Eustress
 - Distress

What Triggers Stress?

- A stress response often begins with events that are perceived as threatening or demanding.

The Physiology of Acute Stress

- When a person perceives an event as threatening, a standard series of physiologic reactions are triggered.
 - Prepares us for fight-or-flight response

The Physiology of Acute Stress

- Reactions to stress can be:
 - Acute
 - Delayed
 - Cumulative
- Stress can result in many physical and psychological symptoms.
- Prolonged or excessive stress is a strong contributor to:
 - Heart disease
 - Hypertension
 - Cancer
 - Alcoholism
 - Depression
 - Job burnout

Responses of Patients to Illness and Injury

- Responses to emergencies are determined by personal methods of adapting to stress.
- Common reactions include:
 - Fear
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Anger
 - Confusion

Responses of Patients to Illness and Injury

- Psychological defense mechanisms include:
 - Denial
 - Regression
 - Projection
 - Displacement
- Reactions to illness or injury are often rooted in the patient's culture.

Responses of Family, Friends, and Bystanders

- Bystanders and family members may exhibit responses similar to the patient's.
- Paramedics should remember:
 - Do not take it personally.
 - Remain calm.
 - Reassure.

Responses of Family, Friends, and Bystanders

- Situations where people should be removed from the scene but not left alone:
 - Extreme anxiety reactions
 - Blind panic
 - Depression
 - Overreaction
 - Conversion hysteria

Responses of the Paramedic

- Paramedics are not immune to stress.
- Avoid becoming irritated with a patient who does not seem ill.

Coping With Your Own Stress

- Early warning signs of stress.
- Identify your body's reaction to the fight-or-flight response.

Coping With Your Own Stress

- Management techniques include:
 - Controlled deep breathing
 - Progressive relaxation
 - Professional assistance
 - Focus on the immediate situation
 - Attempt to get enough rest
 - Exercise
 - Befriend a coworker

Burnout

- The exhaustion of physical or emotional strength
 - May be a consequence of chronic, unrelieved stress
 - The timeline for burnout will vary among people.
 - Avoid false beliefs that can lead to burnout.
- Signs and symptoms

Coping With Death and Dying

- Encounters with life and death are an honor.
- Births and deaths are a holy time in some cultures.
- You will help many people.

Stages of the Grieving Process



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- The stages of grieving include:
 - Denial
 - Anger
 - Bargaining
 - Depression
 - Acceptance

Dealing With the Dying Patient

- People who are dying generally know their situation is serious.
- Dying patients need to feel they still have some control over their lives.

Dealing With a Grieving Family

- Even if there is nothing you can do for the patient, the call is not over.
 - Do not try to hide the body from the family.
 - Do not use euphemisms.
 - Do not hurry to clear away resuscitation equipment.
 - Give the family time with their loved one.
 - Try to arrange for further support.

Dealing With a Grieving Child

- Be particularly sensitive to the emotional needs of children.
 - Children up to 3 years of age will not be aware.
 - 3- to 6-year-olds believe death is temporary.
 - 6- to 9-year-olds may mask their feelings.
 - 9- to 12-year-olds may want to know details.

After the Call Is Over

- Everyone involved in shocking calls is likely to experience some intense feelings.
 - Do not keep feelings inside.
 - Every service should have debriefing procedures.
 - Watch for PTSD after critical incidents.

After the Call Is Over

- Critical incident stress management (CISM) is a resource for emergency personnel involved in particularly traumatic calls.
- Reactions are impossible to predict.
 - Give opportunities to debrief.
 - Never force someone to share their feelings or make debriefings mandatory.

After the Call Is Over

- Employee assistance programs (EAPs)
 - Provided by trained, professional counselor who works outside of the service and is off duty
 - EAPs are successful only if those who attend do so voluntarily and are willing to share issues that bother them.

Peer Support and Suicide Prevention

- EMS providers are not immune to thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts.
 - Prevention starts with recognizing that you or a colleague are becoming overwhelmed.