



Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Florida Conference Brigade, Medical Cadet Corps
351 S State Rd 434, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714



Disaster Victim Assessments

Conducting assessments and providing rapid treatment are the first steps MCC members can take when working with a patient. Look for severe bleeding, low body temperature, and airway obstruction FIRST. Intervention needs to be quick. But, the assessment goes beyond the immediate life-threatening injuries. An assessment can be done from the head to toe. This is called HEAD TO TOE assessment.

The **Objectives of the Head to Toe Assessment** is to:

- Determine the **extent of** injuries as clearly as possible
- Determine **what type** of treatment the patient needs
- Document the patient's injuries.

There is an acronym to use to remember what to look for when conducting a Head to Toe assessment, **DCAP-BTLS**.

- Deformities
- Contusions
- Abrasions
- Punctures
- Burns
- Tenderness
- Lacerations
- Swelling

If the assessment is done the same way each time, it will make the procedure quicker and more accurate over time. Wear PPE (personal protective equipment). Pay attention to how people have been hurt. Ask permission to conduct the assessment if the patient is conscious. Use the Head to Toe process to look for injuries.

Look for Pulse, Movement, and Sensation (PMS) in all extremities. Check for medical ID emblems

Closed Head, Neck and Spinal Injuries

Another important injury to be aware of is the survivor who has a head or spinal injury. The main idea is to **do no harm** when assessing the survivor. Try to minimize the movement of the head and spine while treating any life-threatening conditions.

A closed head injury is a concussion-type injury as opposed to a laceration wound. The signs of a closed-head, neck, or spinal injury most often include:

- Change in consciousness
- Inability to move one or more body parts
- Severe pain or pressure in head, neck or back
- Tingling or numbness in extremities
- Difficulty breathing or seeing
- Heavy bleeding, bruising, or deformity of the head or spine
- Blood or fluid in the ears or nose
- Bruising behind the ear
- Raccoon eyes (bruising around the eyes)
- Uneven pupils
- Seizures
- Nausea or vomiting

Any of these signs or symptoms mandates treating that survivor as having a head or spinal injury.

Stabilizing the Head

During a disaster, having the ideal equipment is rarely available. MCC members may need to be creative. Look for materials that can be used as a backboard: a door, desktop, boards, etc. Look for padding materials to be used to stabilize the head in addition to providing warmth and comfort.

Only move a survivor to increase the safety of both the rescuer and the survivor, or when professional aid is not available for an extended time. Some of the techniques for this are covered in Light Search and Rescue and the Litter courses.

The goal is to hold the head in a straight line with the neck and spine to prevent further injury. Then, another member can bring materials to brace the back and neck.



Next, the stabilization of the head, neck and back need to be conveyed onto a transportation means. This requires padding along either side of the head to secure its position and maintain an open airway.



Remember to be calm; continue to communicate to the survivor. Offer to pray with and for them. The extra time spent here will be of value later.

Exercises

1. Practice doing Head to Toe assessments. Work in pairs. Give 1 or 2 cards with descriptions of an injury to the victim. Have the victim lie on the ground with eyes closed and the rescuer is to approach the victim. The rescuer needs to announce themselves, ask permission to assess the victim, and then do a Head to Toe assessment. For example, asking questions about if the arm hurts or is bleeding, etc. Have the rescuer give a report of findings to the instructor.

Change the position of the victim and rescuer. Let each group have two practice opportunities.

2. Practice padding for a backboard and head stabilization. Scatter materials that could be used around the facility.

Allow each member to come up with materials for stabilization of the head, neck and back.

3. Recite the DCAP-BTLS and what it stands for.

Disaster Victim Assessment

For course certification, the form must be filled out.

Member Name (Print) _____ Instructor Name (Print) _____

Member Position Number _____ Instructor Position Number _____

Member FEMA SID _____ Instructor FEMA SID _____

Date of Instruction _____



Know the objectives of Head to Toe assessment.



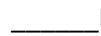
Know the DCAP-BTLS acronym.



List some of the signs of a closed head, neck or spinal injury.



Practice stabilization of the head and neck.



Practice Head to Toe assessments.

With a complete sheet of initials, the instructor's signature signifies certification of completion for the Disaster Victim Assessment course.

Instructor Signature _____