Head, Neck and Spine Injuries
Introduction

- Each year, nearly 11,000 people in the United States are hospitalized with an injury to the head or spine.
- Most of these victims are males between ages 15 and 30.
- Motor vehicle collisions account for nearly half of all head, neck and back injuries.
- Other causes include falls, injuries from sports and recreational activities and violent acts.
- Today, there are hundreds of thousands of permanently disabled victims with a wide range of physical and mental impairments.
- Prompt care can prevent some head, neck and back injuries from resulting in death or disability.
Prevention of head, neck and spine injuries

- Wear safety belts
- Use approved car seats
- Wear appropriate helmets
- At work, follow appropriate OSHA guidelines for equipment and safety practices
- Avoid risky activities, including driving, under the influence of medications that produce drowsiness, drugs, or alcohol
- Store firearms in a locked cabinet with ammunition in a separate secure location
- Do not dive into murky or shallow water (less than 9 feet deep)
Caring for Head, Neck and Spine injuries

- Check

- Call

- Care

Check-Call-Care

Check

- Evaluate the scene for clues.
- Think about the forces involved in the injury.
Checking the Scene

- Consider the possibility of a serious head, neck or spine injury if:
  - Fell from height
  - Injured while diving
  - A strong blow to the head
  - Car crash
  - Involved in bike or motorbike accident with or without a helmet
Checking the Scene

- Consider the possibility of a head, neck or spine injury cont:
  - Electrical injury
  - If victim is unconscious, c/o headache, vomits, has trouble seeing or walking or has a seizure
  - Victim is 65 yrs old or older
  - Has tingling or weakness in extremities
  - Pain or tenderness in neck or back
  - Appears intoxicated or not fully alert
Care for Head, Neck and Spine Injuries

- Check-Call-Care
- Call 9-1-1 as needed
- Care:
  - Minimize movement of the head and neck
  - Only move the victim if they need CPR
  - Roll to side if vomits or fluid in the mouth using manual stabilization
  - If victim is responsive, keep them still, keep them warm and DO NOT let them eat or drink anything.
Concussions

- A concussion is a brain injury involving a temporary impairment.
- Usually there is no head wound nor the signs and symptoms of a more serious brain injury.
- The victim may have been “knocked out” by a blow to the head but regained consciousness quickly.
Concussions

Signs and Symptoms of Concussion

- Temporary confusion
- Memory loss about the traumatic event
- Brief loss of responsiveness
- Mild or moderate altered mental status
- Unusual behavior
- Headache
First aid for concussions

- It is difficult to determine the seriousness of the injury
- Seek medical care for all suspected brain injuries
- Call 9-1-1 and keep the victim still and give supportive care while waiting for help to arrive
- A victim with a suspected head injury, no matter how mild, should never continue an activity in which a second injury may occur (second impact syndrome)
Injuries to the head, neck and spine can be serious.

Some injuries can only be detected if the victim’s condition worsens over time.

Watch for signals of serious injury that require medical attention.

Care for life-threatening emergencies first.

Always call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number as soon as possible.

For open wounds, control the bleeding.

If a fracture is suspected, immobilize the injured part.