

WEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL PROTOCOL

HELMET REMOVAL POLICY

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Purpose: To insure proper handling of patients suspected of sustaining a head, neck or back injury while wearing a protective helmet.

Policy: In the event that an individual is injured while wearing a protective helmet, the initial assessment should proceed as outlined in the primary assessment protocol with concern for assessing airway, breathing and circulation while addressing the potential for cervical spine injury. **The goal is to appropriately treat the patient in terms of cervical spine immobilization and manage the patient's airway.**

M B S P

- I. In those patients wearing a well-fitted helmet, which conforms closely to the patient's head, it is generally preferable to leave the helmet in place:
 - A. If the patient is awake and able to protect his/her airway, the helmet should be left in place and the patient immobilized using the helmet to assist with immobilization.
 - B. If the patient has an altered level of consciousness or, for any other reason, is unable to protect his/her airway, the helmet should be left in place and the patient immobilized using the helmet to assist with immobilization. The face shield should be immediately removed to allow access to the airway.
 1. If the face shield cannot easily be removed, the helmet must be removed using in-line immobilization.
 - C. If the airway cannot be controlled for any reason with the helmet in place, the helmet should immediately be removed, using in-line immobilization.
- II. In those patients wearing poorly fitted helmets, which do not conform closely to the patient's head, the helmet must be removed using in-line immobilization prior to completing spinal immobilization on the patient.
- III. The void behind the occiput created by the helmet and any other protective sports equipment must be filled during the spinal immobilization procedure.

NOTE: When immobilizing patients with the helmet in place, the backboard portion of most immobilization devices will cause the neck to flex forward when the patient's head is placed on it. For that reason, head immobilization devices should generally not be used in these patients. The helmet should rest directly on the backboard with towel rolls used to provide lateral support to the helmet.

EMS crews should work closely with sports medicine personnel (team trainers and physicians) for organized team sports. When providing scheduled standbys at sporting events, EMS personnel should introduce themselves to the sports medicine personnel of the teams prior to the game.

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