UnityPoint Health
EMS System

Drowning

- Drowning results from submersion in water or other liquid for a period of time. The time interval of submersion that causes irreversible death is dependent on several factors such as: temperature of the water, the health of the victim, and any trauma suffered during the event. All person submerged 1 hour or less should be vigorously resuscitated in spite of apparent death. Initial care of the drowning victim shall begin in the water (if the victim is still in the water upon arrival of EMS providers).

- **Critical Thinking Elements:**
- All drowning victims should have a complete trauma assessment.
- Have a high index of suspicion for possible spinal injuries. All drowning patients should be immobilized.
- With cold water note time limit (resuscitate all). These patients have an increased chance of survival.
- Some patients may develop delayed respiratory distress.
- All victims should be transported for evaluation due to potential for worsening over the next several hours.

Legend

- EMR
- EMT
- Intermediate
- Paramedic
- Medical Control

Rescue should only be attempted by rescuers specially trained in water rescue techniques and appropriately equipped.

Universal Patient Care SMO

EMR

1. Make sure scene is safe to enter.
2. Assess airway and breathing. Ventilate or apply O2 if necessary.
3. Remove wet clothing, wrap in dry/warm blankets. If cervical spine injury suspected establish and maintain spinal motion restriction (have dry/ warm blanket on spine board prior to spinal immobilization).
4. Initiate CPR if indicated.
5. Treat respiratory and/or cardiac symptoms per the appropriate protocol.

EMT

1. Continue EMR care.
2. Initiate ALS intercept if needed and transport as soon as possible.
3. Consider **DUONEB** for respiratory distress: May repeat every 15 minutes as needed (if wheezes still present)
4. **If respiratory distress with wheezing or stridor present consider CPAP.**
5. **Contact receiving hospital as soon as possible (need time to prepare) or Medical Control if necessary**.

P **I**

1. Continue EMT care.
2. Place the patient on the monitor and establish an IV of NS at a TKO rate.
3. Consider 12 lead EKG.
4. **Contact receiving hospital as soon as possible or Medical Control if necessary**.

Note: Refer to “Hypothermia” protocol for cold water drowning