

# Stay Safe, Stay Prepared:

## Guidelines for medical and mental health emergencies

Compiled by:  
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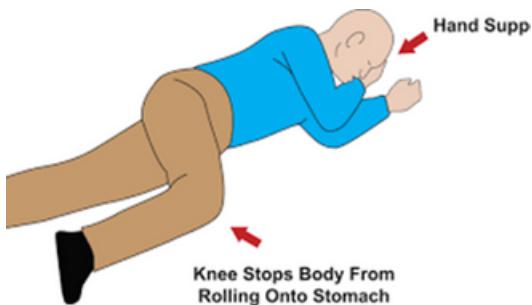
**UFS**  
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS;  
HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTRE

# Medical Emergencies

## Fainting

(If someone faints or feels like fainting)

- 1** Stay calm
- 2** Check safety (yours and the patient). Move them away from danger (road, stairs, sharp objects)
- 3** Lay flat – Place them on their back
- 4** Elevate legs – Raise legs about 30 cm to improve blood flow
- 5** Loosen clothing – Around neck, chest, and waist
- 6** Check breathing –
  - If breathing normally → keep them on their back
  - If not breathing → call for emergency assistance (ER24)
- 7** If vomiting – Turn onto their side (recovery position)



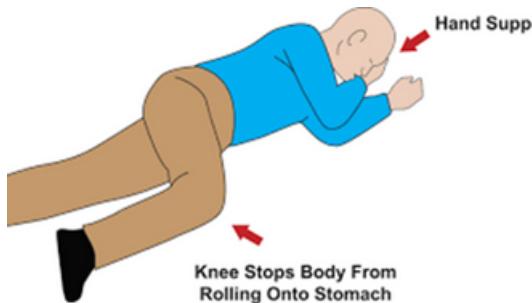
- 8** Stay & reassure – Keep them lying down until fully alert
- 9** Offer water – Once awake and stable
- 10** Accompany patient to the Kovsie Health clinic (during office hours)

# Medical Emergencies

## Seizures

(If someone is fitting / experiencing seizures)

- 1** Stay calm – most seizures stop on their own within a few minutes
- 2** Protect from injury:
  - Remove harmful objects (furniture, sharp items)
  - Place something soft (like a folded jacket) under their head
- 3** Loosen tight clothing around the neck (tie, scarf, collar)
- 4** Do not restrain the person – let the seizure run its course
- 5** Do not put anything in their mouth – they cannot swallow their tongue, and forcing objects can cause injury
- 6** Check breathing:
  - After the seizure, roll them onto their side (recovery position) to keep the airway clear



- 7** Stay with them until they are fully awake and orientated
- 7** Note the time – how long the seizure lasts is important
- 8** Accompany patient to the Kovsie Health clinic (during office hours)

**Call emergency help (ER24) immediately if:**

- Another seizure starts soon after the first
- The person has trouble breathing after the fit / seizure
- They were injured during the seizure
- If the seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes



# Medical Emergencies

## Panic Attack / struggling to breathe

(Struggling to breathe or pain in the chest)

### 1 Stay calm

- Speak gently and reassure them: "You're safe, I'm here with you."
- Avoid saying "calm down" – instead, guide them step by step as follows:

### 2 Help them control breathing

- Encourage slow, steady breaths:
  - Inhale through the nose for 4 seconds
  - Hold for 1–2 seconds
  - Exhale through the mouth for 6 seconds
- You can breathe with them to set a rhythm



### 3 Grounding techniques (to bring them back to the present):

- 5-4-3-2-1 method:
  - Name 5 things you see
  - 4 things you feel/touch
  - 3 things you hear
  - 2 things you smell
  - 1 thing you taste
- These shifts focus away from fear



### 4 Create a safe space

- Move them somewhere quiet if possible
- Reduce noise, bright lights, and crowds

### 5 Stay with them

- Don't leave them alone until the panic attack passes
- Most attacks last 5–20 minutes and then ease

### 6 Refer the patient to Student Counselling and Development

# Mental Health Emergencies

## Signs of Psychosis or Bizarre Behaviour

### What it is:

Psychosis involves losing touch with reality. A person may see or hear things that are not there (hallucinations), believe things that are not true (delusions), or behave in ways that seem very unusual or confused. They may appear agitated, withdrawn, or suspicious of others.

### What to do:

- 1** Stay calm – your calmness helps reduce fear or agitation
- 2** Ensure safety – remove any dangerous objects and keep some distance
- 3** Do not argue with delusions or hallucinations – acknowledge their feelings without confirming or denying the false belief
- 4** Speak gently and clearly – use short, simple sentences
- 5** Offer reassurance – let them know they are safe and you want to help
- 6** Avoid touching them suddenly – unless absolutely necessary for safety
- 7** Do not leave them alone – stay nearby until help arrives
- 8** Call for help:
  - Call ER24 emergency services immediately
  - If the student is very aggressive – call Protection Services to assist
  - Contact Student Counselling and Development to offer follow-up support



# Contact us:

## **Student Counselling and Development**

Bloemfontein campus: T: +27 51 401 2853 / E: [scd@ufs.ac.za](mailto:scd@ufs.ac.za)

South campus: T: +27 51 505 1989 / E: [scdsouth@ufs.ac.za](mailto:scdsouth@ufs.ac.za)

Qwaqwa campus: T: +27 58 718 5125 / E: [scdq@ufs.ac.za](mailto:scdq@ufs.ac.za)

## **Kovsie Health Clinic**

Bloemfontein campus: T: +27 51 401 2603 / 3537 / 2530

South campus: T: +27 51 505 1495

Qwaqwa campus: T: +27 58 718 5228

## **ER24**

010 205 3057 / 084 124

# Phoning the ambulance:

1  
2  
3  
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9

- Stay calm
- Identify yourself
- Provide your telephone number
- Give clear instructions regarding the exact location of the emergency
- Keep in touch with the staff at the Emergency Centre
- Do not put the phone down first
- Listen to the instructions and write them down if possible
- Stay with the patient until the ambulance arrives
- Do not move the person from the location without informing the emergency services

