Management of Medical Emergencies in the Dental Office

Glossary of terms

**Acetone** – waste product of cellular metabolism

**Acidosis** – acid condition in the blood or body fluids

**AED** – automatic external defibrillator

**Agitation** – mental confusion caused by hypoxia

**Allergen** – substance capable of causing an allergic reaction

**Anaphylaxis** – severe allergic reaction affecting respiration and heart function

**Aneroid gauge** – gauge or dial on a blood pressure cuff

**Angina** – chest pain related to exertion, emotion or exercise

**Angioneurotic edema** – allergic swelling of the pharyngeal structures

**Antecubital space** – elbow space

**Antibody** – body chemical produced on exposure to germs or allergens

**Antigen** – substance capable of stimulating antibody formation

**Antisialagogue** – drug used to decrease secretion of salivary glands

**Aphasia** – inability to speak

**Apnea** – not breathing

**Arrhythmias** – irregularities or abnormal heart rhythms

**Ascites** – fluid accumulation in the abdomen

**Aspiration** – act of inhaling fluid or vomit into the lungs

**Atherosclerosis** – build-up of fatty deposits in the arteries

**Benzodiazepines** – class of drugs used to reduce anxiety

**Brachial artery** – artery which can be palpated on the inside of the antecubital space

**Bradycardia** – slow heart rate, less than 60 beats per minute

**Bronchioles** – small airway tubes within the lungs

**Bronchitis** – inflammation of the bronchi caused by irritation

**Bronchodilator** – drug capable of relaxing (dilating) the bronchioles

**Bronchospasm** – constriction or narrowing of the bronchioles due to muscle constriction

**Carpopedal spasm** – painful claw-like appearance of the hands seen in hyperventilation

**Cerebral cortex** – outer layer of the brain controlling higher functions (motor function, consciousness, sensation)

**Circumoral** – around the mouth

**Clonic** – repetitive muscle contraction and relaxation phase of a seizure

**COPD** – chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a combination of emphysema and bronchitis

**Cyanotic** – bluish discoloration of the skin caused by low oxygen levels in the blood

**Dehydration** – condition caused by the abnormal loss of fluid from the body

**Diabetes** – disorder of sugar metabolism due to a lack of insulin

**Diaphoresis** – sweating

**Diastole** – relaxation phase of the heart cycle

**Diastolic** – the lower, or second, of the two pressures making up the blood pressure; the force of blood against the blood vessel walls during ventricular relaxation

**Dyspneia** – shortness of breath

**Emphysema** – chronic, progressive disease of the lung involving the smaller airways and air sacs

**Epigastric** – the upper portion of the abdomen

**Epilepsy** – neurological disorder associated with seizures

**Exhalation** – movement of air out of the lungs

**Fibrinolysis** – process when a clot or coagulation is broken down

**Gingival hyperplasia** – an overgrowth of gingival tissue often requiring surgery to reduce

**Glaucoma** – increased pressure in the anterior chamber of the eye which may lead to blindness

**Glucose** – form of sugar preferred by the body as an energy source for metabolism

**HEPA respirator** – High Efficiency Particulate Arresting; air respirator used for personal protection when working with patients with known or suspected tuberculosis

**Hepatomegaly** – swelling or enlargement of the liver seen in right heart failure

**Histamine** – potent chemical released by body cells in response to infection or allergy

**Hypertension** – elevated blood pressure exceeding 140/90

**Hyperventilation** – increased rate and/or depth of breathing leading to excessive excretion of carbon dioxide

**Hypoglycemia** – low blood sugar

**Hypopharynx** – lower portion of the pharynx (throat) at openings of trachea and esophagus

**Hypotension** – lower than normal blood pressure

**Hypoxia** – body is deprived of adequate oxygen supply

**IM** – intramuscular; drug administration into a muscle

**Inhalation** – movement of air into the lungs

**Ischemic** – decreased or inadequate blood supply to an organ or tissue

**IV** – intravenous; drug administration into a vein

**Jaundice** – yellow discoloration of the skin and sclera due to liver disease

**Kussmaul respirations** – rapid deep ventilations seen in diabetic ketoacidosis

**Laryngoscope** – instrument used to view the larynx

**Laryngospasm** – spasm (constriction) of the vocal cords

**Larynx** – the voice-box

**Magill forceps** – instrument used for manipulation of structures or tubes in the pharynx

**Metabolic** – relating to metabolism; chemical reactions that happen within the body to maintain life

**Myocardial infarction (MI)** – heart attack; portion of heart muscle becomes ischemic and dies

**NTG** – abbreviation for nitroglycerin; blood vessel dilator

**Orthopnea** – difficulty breathing only when lying flat

**Orthostatic hypotension** – decreased blood pressure caused by rapid movements from supine to standing posture, or loss of body fluids

**Osmotic** – pressure on water exerted by dissolved substances in a fluid separated by a semipermeable membrane

**Pallor** – pale appearance to the skin due to decreased blood flow in the skin

**Palpated** – feeling a body part or structure

**Pharynx** – the throat

**Pitting edema** – swelling of the ankles and feet due to heart failure

**PO** – by mouth; administration of drugs by mouth (per os)

**Polyuria** – excessive urination

**Post-ictal** – the time period immediately following a seizure

**Prodromal** – initial symptom or sign

**Pruritus** – itching

**Pulmonary edema** – fluid build-up in the lung due to left heart failure

**Rales** – crackling or bubbling sounds heard in the chest with pulmonary edema

**Respiratory rate** – number of respirations per minute

**Sphygmomanometer** – inflatable blood pressure cuff with Velcro closure

**SQ** – subcutaneous; injection of drugs into subcutaneous (fat) tissue

**Sternocleidomastoid** – muscle of the side of the neck

**Stethoscope** – instrument for listening to breath or heart sounds

**Stridor** – high pitched breathing sound caused by partial collapse or obstruction of the upper airway during inhalation

**Supine** – lying on the back in a horizontal plane; subsupine positioning is when the head is slightly lower that the knees to return more blood flow to the brain

**Syncope** – fainting

**Systole** – contraction phase of the heart cycle

**Systolic** – top, or first, of the two pressures making up the blood pressure; the force of blood against the blood vessel walls during ventricular contraction

**Tachycardia** – a rapid heart rate, faster than 100 beats per minute

**Tonic** – phase of seizure where all muscles of the body remain contracted

**Umbilicus** – navel or belly button

**Urticaria** – raised wheals (hives) of the skin seen in allergic reactions

**Ventricular fibrillation** – disorganized heart rhythm that does not result in a pulse

**Xiphoid process** – lower-most pointy part of sternum