



COURSE HANDBOOK

Basic First Aid

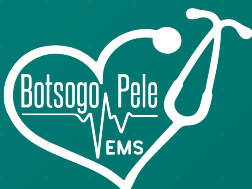
Everyday emergencies



— COURSE HANDBOOK · 2026 EDITION

Basic First Aid

Respond with confidence to common emergencies: bleeding, burns, choking, fractures, shock, seizures, stroke, heart attack, allergies and more.



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Emergency

926



About this handbook

This handbook supports, but does not replace, hands-on training with a qualified instructor. It follows widely used international first aid and resuscitation guidance. Always follow the instructions of emergency services and your own training. In an emergency in Botswana, call 926 (Botsogo Pele EMS) or 997 (national ambulance).

Before you start

First aid is the help given to an injured or ill person before professional help arrives. Simple actions taken in the first few minutes can prevent a situation from getting worse, ease pain, and save lives. This handbook covers the most common emergencies you are likely to meet.

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- ✓ Carry out a primary survey (DRS ABC)
- ✓ Control serious bleeding
- ✓ Help a choking adult, child or infant
- ✓ Treat burns, fractures and shock
- ✓ Recognise stroke, heart attack and seizures
- ✓ Respond to allergic reactions, low blood sugar, heat illness and snake bites

CHAPTER 1

Your role as a first aider

- **Protect yourself first.** Check for danger such as traffic, fire, electricity or aggression. Use gloves if available.
- **Assess** what happened and how many people are hurt.
- **Get help early.** Call **926** (Botsogo Pele EMS) or **997** (national ambulance). Give your exact location, what happened and how many casualties.
- **Give first aid** for the most serious problems first: breathing, then bleeding.
- **Reassure** the casualty and stay with them until help arrives.

Use the **primary survey (DRS ABC)** for any casualty: Danger, Response, Send for help, Airway, Breathing, Circulation. If someone is unresponsive and not breathing normally, start CPR (see the CPR & AED handbook).

A basic first aid kit

- Disposable gloves
- Sterile dressings and plasters
- Crepe and triangular bandages
- Adhesive tape and scissors
- Sterile saline or clean water for washing wounds
- Cling film (for burns)
- Foil emergency blanket
- CPR face shield

Bleeding and wounds

Severe bleeding

- 1 Put on gloves if available. Apply **firm, direct pressure** on the wound with a dressing or clean cloth.
- 2 Keep pressing. If blood soaks through, add more padding on top. Do not remove the first dressing.
- 3 Secure the dressing with a firm bandage.
- 4 Lay the person down and keep them warm. Watch for signs of shock.
- 5 For life-threatening bleeding from an arm or leg that pressure cannot control, a trained person may apply a **tourniquet** 5–7 cm above the wound. Note the time it was applied.



Embedded objects

Do not pull out an object stuck in a wound. Press around it and pad either side to stop it moving.

Minor cuts and grazes

Rinse with clean running water, pat dry and cover with a plaster or dressing. Seek medical advice if the wound is deep, dirty, from an animal bite, or shows signs of infection.

Nosebleeds

Sit the person down, leaning **forward**. Pinch the soft part of the nose for 10–15 minutes. Seek help if bleeding continues beyond 20–30 minutes or follows a head injury.

CHAPTER 3

Choking

Mild choking: the person can cough, speak or breathe. Encourage them to keep coughing.

Severe choking: they cannot cough, speak or breathe, and may clutch their throat.

Adults and children over 1 year

- 1 Give up to **5 back blows**: lean them forward and strike firmly between the shoulder blades with the heel of your hand.
- 2 If that fails, give up to **5 abdominal thrusts**: stand behind, place a fist between the belly button and the bottom of the breastbone, grasp it with your other hand, and pull sharply inwards and upwards.
- 3 Repeat 5 back blows and 5 abdominal thrusts. Call **926** (Botsogo Pele EMS) or **997** (national ambulance) if the blockage does not clear.
- 4 If they become unresponsive, lower them to the ground and start CPR.

Infants under 1 year

- 1 Lay the baby face down along your forearm or thigh, head lower than the body, supporting the head.
- 2 Give up to **5 back blows** between the shoulder blades.
- 3 Turn them face up and give up to **5 chest thrusts** with two fingers in the centre of the chest.
- 4 Repeat and call for help. **Never use abdominal thrusts on an infant.**



After abdominal thrusts

Anyone who has received abdominal thrusts should be checked by a doctor, as they can cause internal injury.

CHAPTER 4

Burns

1

Cool the burn under cool or lukewarm running water for **20 minutes**.

2

Remove jewellery and clothing near the burn, unless stuck to the skin.

3

Cover loosely with cling film or a clean, non-fluffy dressing.

4

Keep the person warm: cool the burn, not the patient.



Never

Do not use ice, butter, toothpaste or creams. Do not burst blisters.

Get medical help for burns larger than the casualty's palm, burns to the face, hands, feet, genitals or joints, deep burns, electrical or chemical burns, and any burn on a child or older person.

Chemical burns: brush off powders, then rinse with plenty of running water for at least 20 minutes.

Electrical burns: make sure the power is off before touching the person.

CHAPTER 5

Bones, joints and head injuries

Signs of a fracture include pain, swelling, deformity, an inability to move the limb, and a grating feeling.

- 1 Tell the person to keep still.
- 2 Support the injured part in the position you found it, using your hands, padding or a sling.
- 3 Do not try to straighten a deformed limb.
- 4 For an open fracture, cover the wound with a sterile dressing and control bleeding without pressing on the bone.
- 5 Get medical help and watch for shock.

Sprains and strains: rest, apply a cold pack wrapped in cloth for up to 20 minutes, give gentle support with a bandage, and raise the limb.

! Head, neck and spine

If you suspect a spinal injury (fall from height, diving, road crash), keep the person still and support their head in line with the body. Only move them if they are in danger. After a head injury, seek help if they were knocked out, are vomiting, confused, drowsy or have a worsening headache.

Shock

Shock is a life-threatening condition where not enough blood reaches the vital organs. It can follow severe bleeding, burns, serious infection or allergic reaction.

- Pale, cold, clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse and fast, shallow breathing
- Feeling faint, dizzy, thirsty or anxious
- Confusion, then drowsiness

1 Treat the cause, for example by stopping the bleeding.

2 Lay the person down. If there is no leg injury, raise their legs slightly.

3 Keep them warm with a blanket. Loosen tight clothing.

4 Call **926** (Botsogo Pele EMS) or **997** (national ambulance). Do not give food or drink.

5 Monitor breathing. Be ready to start CPR.

Medical emergencies

Heart attack

Chest pain or pressure that may spread to the arms, neck, jaw or back, with breathlessness, sweating or nausea. Sit them down in a comfortable position, Call **926** (Botsogo Pele EMS) or **997** (national ambulance), and if they are not allergic and the call-taker agrees, give one adult aspirin (300 mg) to chew slowly. Help with their own heart medication if they have it.

Stroke: think FAST

F Face: has it drooped on one side?

A Arms: can they raise both and keep them up?

S Speech: is it slurred or confused?

T Time: call for help immediately and note when symptoms started.

Seizures

- Protect them from injury: move hard objects away, cushion the head.
- Do **not** restrain them or put anything in their mouth.
- Time the seizure. Call for help if it lasts more than 5 minutes, repeats, is their first seizure, or they are injured.
- Afterwards, check breathing and place them in the recovery position.

Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)

Swelling of the face or throat, difficulty breathing, wheezing, widespread rash, or collapse after contact with a trigger such as food, insect stings or medicine. Call **926** (Botsogo Pele EMS) or **997** (national ambulance). Help them use their adrenaline auto-injector in the outer thigh. A second dose may be given after 5 minutes if there is no improvement. Let them sit up if breathing is difficult, or lie down with legs raised if they feel faint.

Low blood sugar (diabetes)

Shaking, sweating, confusion or unusual behaviour in a person with diabetes. If they are awake and can swallow, give a sugary drink, glucose tablets or sweets, then a snack once they improve. If they do not

improve or become drowsy, call for help.

Asthma attack

Help them sit upright and use their reliever (usually blue) inhaler, ideally with a spacer. If there is no improvement, keep using it as directed and call for help.

Heat, bites and stings

Heat exhaustion and heatstroke

Botswana's heat makes this common at outdoor events and on work sites. **Heat exhaustion** causes heavy sweating, headache, dizziness and cramps. Move the person somewhere cool, have them lie down with legs raised, and give water or an oral rehydration drink.



Heatstroke is an emergency

Hot skin, confusion, collapse or seizures mean heatstroke. Call for help immediately and cool them as fast as possible: remove clothing, soak them with cool water and fan them.

Snake bites

1

Move away from the snake. Do not try to catch or kill it. Note its appearance if you can do so safely.

2

Keep the person calm and as still as possible. Call **926** (Botsogo Pele EMS) or **997** (national ambulance).

3

Remove rings, watches and tight clothing near the bite before swelling starts.

4

Keep the bitten limb still and at about heart level, supported with a splint or sling.

5

Do **not** cut the wound, suck out venom, apply a tight tourniquet, or use ice. Get to hospital quickly.

Bee and wasp stings

Scrape the sting out sideways with a fingernail or card. Apply a cold compress. Watch for signs of anaphylaxis.

REVIEW

Check your knowledge

Try to answer each question before revealing the answer.

1 What is the first thing you should do at any emergency scene?

Check for danger to yourself, bystanders and the casualty.

2 Blood is soaking through the dressing on a wound. What should you do?

Keep pressing and add more padding on top. Do not remove the first dressing.

3 How long should you cool a burn under running water?

20 minutes.

4 How do you help a choking infant?

Up to 5 back blows, then up to 5 chest thrusts, repeated. Never abdominal thrusts.

5 What does FAST stand for?

Face, Arms, Speech, Time.

6 Should you put something in a person's mouth during a seizure?

No. Protect them from injury, time the seizure and do not restrain them.

7 Name three things you must not do for a snake bite.

Do not cut the wound, suck out venom, apply a tight tourniquet or use ice.

Ready to practise?

This handbook goes with our hands-on Basic First Aid course, taught by Botsogo Pele EMS certified EMTs.

Book a course: +267 397 2684 · +267 7158 1075 · botsogopeleems@gmail.com

WhatsApp: +267 7158 1075 (wa.me/26771581075)

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