Sucking Chest Wound

**Skill Level:** RN, LPN

**Definition:** A chest wall defect that allows air to enter the pleural space causing respiratory distress.

**DATA BASE:**

**Subjective:**
- Describe mechanism of injury, i.e., penetrating chest trauma. Elicit time, place, source and description of pain.

**Objective:**
- Note a sucking noise as air enters and leaves the chest through the wound.
- If injury is due to gunshot wound or penetrating trauma, assess for entry and exit wound.
- Acute respiratory distress.
- Diminished or absent breath sounds on the afflicted side.
- Possible subcutaneous emphysema.

**Assessment:**
- Sucking chest wound.

**Plan:**
- These patients all require transport to an emergency facility. Have somebody arrange transportation while the following are being done.
  1. Apply chest seal dressing to both entry and exit wounds.
  2. Maintain patient's airway, breathing, and circulation.
  3. Administer Oxygen per nasal cannula or mask to keep O2 Saturation above 94%.
  4. Do not remove any object protruding from the chest as this will destroy pressure gradient even faster and increase bleeding.
  5. Establish IV therapy with large bore catheter, two sites if possible.
  6. May notify provider while awaiting transport.

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**30 Second Review**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RN, LPN</th>
<th>Sucking Chest Wound</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEF:</strong></td>
<td>A chest wall defect that allows air to enter the pleural space.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>S/S:</strong></td>
<td>Acute respiratory distress, diminished or absent breath sounds.</td>
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| **RX:** | 1) Arrange emergency transport. While waiting apply a vented chest seal to penetrating chest trauma.  
2) Administer O2 by nasal cannula or mask, to keep oxygen SATs >94%.  
3) May start IV TKO, and obtain EKG |
Sucking Chest Wound

APPROVED:

Medical Services Manager ____________________________ Date __________

Chief Medical Officer ____________________________ Date __________

Clinical Medical Director ____________________________ Date __________

Effective Date: ________________
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Supersedes: February 2015