

## LIST OF MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

This medical emergencies document is designed primarily as an educational resource to help dental assistants provide quality oral health services. The information provided in this medical emergencies document is for reference only and should not be considered inclusive of all proper procedures or exclusive of other procedures that are reasonably directed to obtaining the same results. This information was obtained from the following sources: *Modern Dental Assisting*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, by Doni L. Bird and Debbie S. Robinson, and *Dental Assisting: A Comprehensive Approach*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, by Donna J. Phinney and Judy H. Halsted. The DALE Foundation makes no warranty of the accuracy, completeness or timeliness of the information contained in this medical emergencies document, and shall not be liable for any decision made in reliance on this information.

Dental assistants should recognize that dentists have the sole authority to make decisions regarding oral health diagnoses and treatment. Further, state laws vary with respect to procedures that may — and may not — be performed by dental assistants. Dental assistants should ensure that their activities are in compliance with relevant state law. Contact your state's dental board, or go to the State-Specific Information section of the DALE Foundation's website at [www.dalefoundation.org](http://www.dalefoundation.org) or DANB's website at [www.danb.org](http://www.danb.org) for information on state laws, rules, and regulations related to dental assisting duties.

CONDITION	SYMPTOM(S)	TREATMENT*
<b>Allergic reaction</b>	Edema, erythema, urticaria	Remove irritant, administer an antihistamine if needed
<b>Anaphylactic reaction</b>	Blood pressure drops, airways constrict	Injection of epinephrine
<b>Angina pectoris</b>	Pain in chest/base of neck	Administer nitroglycerin pills or spray
<b>Asthma</b>	Breathlessness	Administer patient's inhaler (bronchodilator)
<b>Congestive heart failure</b>	Difficult breathing, swollen ankles and legs	Elevate the head and heart, allow frequent restroom breaks
<b><i>Epilepsy (four types)</i></b>		
<b>Grand mal</b>	Seizure lasting two to five minutes, body jerking, twitching	Remove items that may harm patient, make patient comfortable after seizure
<b>Status epilepticus</b>	Continuous seizures	Summon emergency services
<b>Petit mal seizure</b>	Blank stare	No treatment necessary
<b>Partial Seizures</b>	Simple/patient conscious, complex/patient unconscious, involuntary twitching	No treatment necessary
<b>Hyperventilation</b>	Quick breathing, nervousness, faintness	Calm patient, have patient breathe in paper bag or cupped hands

CONDITION	SYMPTOM(s)	TREATMENT*
<b>Hypoglycemia</b>	Nervousness, trembling, weakness, cold sweats	Administer orange juice or other source of sugar, in buccal mucosa or administer injection of glucagon
<b>Myocardial infarction</b>	Possible pain in chest, ashen color, diaphoresis (sweating profusely)	Position patient with head slightly elevated, administer oxygen and nitroglycerin pills, summon medical services
<b>Orthostatic hypotension</b>	Loss of consciousness when standing upright, light-headed	In the dental office, have the patient sit upright initially before standing. <i>Note:</i> The patient should consult a physician if his or her blood pressure falls because of other underlying issues.
<b>Stroke</b>	Loss of speech, dizziness, weakness on one side of body	Administer oxygen, take vital signs, summon medical services
<b>Syncope</b>	Loss of consciousness	Lower the head below the level of the heart to increase blood flow to the brain
<b>Type I diabetes mellitus</b>	Thirst, frequent urination, disorientation, nausea/vomiting, abdominal pain, acetone breath	Administer patient's insulin
<b>Type II diabetes mellitus</b>	Same as Type I but often not as severe	Normally controlled by diet, may need to administer oral hypoglycemics

\* Dental Auxiliaries should check with the employer dentist and/or state's dental practice act to determine if treatment of medical emergencies is restricted to specific oral healthcare providers. For example, most states prohibit dental assistants from administering medications or injections.