

ABCDE assessment

Extract from: St John. 2013. *Clinical Procedures and Guidelines Comprehensive Edition 2013-2015*. Wellington: St John. Page 269.

10.17 THE PRIMARY SURVEY

The primary survey is a rapid assessment of immediate threats to life. The primary survey is important for all patients, not just those suffering from trauma. Any deterioration in a patient's condition must prompt a reassessment of the primary survey looking for a cause.

- **Airway:** examine for and establish an adequate airway. Consider the possibility of cervical spine injury, but the airway takes priority.
- **Breathing:** examine for and establish adequate breathing. Look at and feel chest movement.
- **Circulation:** examine for and establish adequate circulation. Feel the pulse rate and strength. Look at and feel peripheral perfusion/capillary refill. Check for (and compress) external bleeding.
- **Disability:** check the level of consciousness using AVPU or the motor score of the GCS. Consider immobilising the cervical spine if appropriate.
- **Exposure, examination and environmental control:** appropriately expose and examine the patient. Keep them warm.