

EXHALE ACADEMY CSE CHEAT SHEET #4

EMERGENCY ALGORITHM

UNSTABLE CLUES

- Severe respiratory distress, cyanosis, apnea, gasping.
- Altered mental status, obtunded, unresponsive, unable to protect airway.
- Severe acidosis, rising PaCO₂, falling pH.
- Stridor, facial burns, sooty secretions, airway swelling.
- Hypotension/bradycardia after chest trauma.

ACT NOW ACTIONS

- Airway positioning and suction as needed.
- 100% oxygen for severe distress, trauma, smoke inhalation, CO poisoning.
- Bag-mask ventilation if apnea or inadequate breathing.
- Intubation/mechanical ventilation for failure or airway protection.
- Needle decompression/chest tube for tension pneumothorax signs.

STABLE PATHWAY

- Gather visual and bedside information.
- Confirm with ABG/CXR/labs when indicated.
- Choose treatment based on the cause.
- Reassess response and adjust.

DO NOT WAIT FOR

- Chest x-ray when tension pneumothorax is obvious.
- PFTs during severe distress.
- Lengthy history when the airway is closing.
- Extra labs when ventilation is failing.

REASSESSMENT TARGETS

- Work of breathing improves.
- SpO₂/PaO₂ improves.
- pH and PaCO₂ trend safer.
- Mental status improves.
- Heart rate and respiratory rate normalize.

EXHALE MEMORY LINE

If unstable: support airway, breathing, circulation first. If stable: gather targeted data.