



**SCLERODERMA
FOUNDATION**

SUPPORT • EDUCATION • RESEARCH

**ATTENTION:
EMERGENCY
MEDICAL
RESPONDERS**

Scleroderma Basics

- The symptoms of scleroderma may be visible when the skin is affected. Symptoms can also be invisible when internal organs are affected.
- Scleroderma can vary for each patient. Some people may not present with all of the symptoms that are associated with the disease.
- In general, scleroderma is a disease of the small blood vessels that causes skin thickening and tightening due to a buildup of collagen, or scar tissue. This collagen overproduction also can affect internal organs causing other complications and various symptoms.
- Scleroderma is not contagious. It is also not infectious, cancerous or malignant.

What are some challenges that emergency responders may face?

PROBLEM: The pulse oximeter does not appear to be working correctly.

WHAT COULD BE HAPPENING?

No. 1: The decrease in blood flow to the fingers of a patient with Raynaud Phenomenon may interfere with the pulse oximeter's ability to read correctly when applied to the fingers. A special oximeter that is applied to the forehead can be used for an accurate reading if available.

Further Explanation

It is estimated that more than 90 percent of scleroderma patients have Raynaud Phenomenon, an exaggerated response to cold or stress. The blood vessels in the fingers and toes constrict, or spasm. This leads to decreased blood flow, causing a change in color to blue or white (cyanosis) to the fingers and toes. When blood vessels become so constricted that blood flow stops for an extended period of time, ulcers may form in the fingers or toes.

WHAT ELSE COULD BE HAPPENING?

No. 2: When using supplemental oxygen on a patient with lung scarring (pulmonary fibrosis) or lung high blood pressure (pulmonary hypertension), you may not see a significant rise in the patient's O₂ saturation.

Further Explanation

Pulmonary fibrosis, or pulmonary hypertension, will not allow for proper oxygen transfer from the lungs to the blood. Therefore, a pulse oximetry reading may be affected due to lung involvement.

PROBLEM: I am unable to get an IV into my scleroderma patient.

WHAT COULD BE HAPPENING?

Along with hardening and tightening skin on arms and hands, the vascular system can be affected.

When trying to place an IV in a scleroderma patient, consider a smaller gauge needle. You can also wrap the site with a warm towel to try and bring the veins closer to the skin surface. Ultrasound guidance can be used to help find blood vessels if available.

Quick Reminders

- It is not uncommon for a scleroderma patient to take Ace-Inhibitors for renal (kidney) involvement. This can lead to a higher-than-normal blood pressure.
- Some scleroderma patients have pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH), an increased pressure in the pulmonary arteries. Some PAH patients have an intravenous (IV) pump to deliver medications. If you need to transfer the patient, **DO NOT REMOVE THE PUMP, THE MEDICATIONS NEED TO RUN CONTINUOUSLY.**
- Some scleroderma patients are treated with immunosuppressants. Be sure to alert emergency room staff right away because this can influence treatment plans.

The Scleroderma Foundation thanks Tracy Frech M.D., M.S. of the University of Utah Scleroderma Center, for her assistance in the preparation of this document.

Note: Please fill out in pencil so changes can be made as needed

Date when this form was last changed or updated: _____

Name: _____ Phone No.: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Birth date: _____ Social Security No.: _____

INSURANCE INFORMATION

Medical Insurance Company 1: _____

Policy/ID No.: _____ Group: _____

Medical Insurance Company 2: _____

Policy/ID No.: _____ Group: _____

Medicare No.: _____ Medicaid No.: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone No.: _____ Cell Phone No.: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Does the above emergency contact have power of attorney? Yes No

Are they a health care proxy? Yes No Location of document _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone No.: _____ Cell Phone No.: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Does the above emergency contact have power of attorney? Yes No

Are they a health care proxy? Yes No Location of document _____

Doctor: _____ Phone No.: _____

Doctor: _____ Phone No.: _____

Hospital Preference: _____

Do you have a signed do-not-resuscitate or do-not-intubate document? Yes No

Location of document: _____

The Scleroderma Foundation's mission is three-fold:

- ☞ To help patients and their families cope with scleroderma through mutual support programs, peer counseling, physician referrals, and educational information.
- ☞ To promote public awareness and education through patient and health professional seminars, literature, and publicity campaigns.
- ☞ To stimulate and support research to improve treatment and ultimately find the cause and cure of scleroderma and related diseases.



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