Suspected Spinal Injuries

Does the patient meet Adult/Pediatric Major Trauma Criteria with a BLUNT mechanism of injury? (T-6, T-7)

Yes

If the patient does not meet Major Trauma Criteria for Blunt Mechanism and/or does for Penetrating Mechanism, does the patient have any of the following:

1. Altered mental status – Associated with trauma - for any reason including possible intoxication from alcohol or drugs (GCS<15)
2. Complaint of neck and/or spine pain or tenderness
3. Weakness, tingling or numbness of the trunk or extremities at any time since the injury
4. Deformity of the spine not present prior to the incident
5. Painful distracting injury or circumstances (i.e. anything producing an unreliable physical exam)
6. High Risk mechanism of injury associated with unstable spinal injuries that include, but are not limited to:
   • Axial Load (i.e. diving injury, spearing tackle)
   • High Speed motorized vehicle crashes or roll over
   • Pedestrian or bicyclist struck/collision
   • Falls >3feet/5steps or patient’s height

Yes

Spine injury should be suspected and the patient should be placed in a properly fitted cervical collar and spinal movement minimized.

No

Patients without any of the above findings may be transported without the use of a cervical collar or any other means to restrict spinal motion.

Notes:

• Spinal movement can be minimized by application of a properly fitting rigid cervical collar and securing the patient to the EMS stretcher.
• When spinal motion restriction has been initiated and a higher level of care arrives, patients should be reassessed for spinal injury (per this protocol).
• When possible, the highest level of care on scene will determine if spinal motion restriction is to be used or discontinued (collar removed, etc.)
• A long spine board is one of multiple modalities that can be used to minimize spinal movement. Electing not to use a long spine board will not constitute a deviation from the standard of care.
• Long spine boards do not have a role in transporting patients between facilities