

EVALUATING NREMT QUESTIONS

FIRST STEP

Determine Mental Status

This isn't always clear-cut but if the question tells you that the patient "complains of" something without any other clues, the patient likely has a normal mental status. Specific descriptions of mental status on the negative side (from confused to anxious to unresponsive) indicate a potentially critical patient—and the need for more urgent action.

SECOND STEP

Look for Signs of Criticality

Words that indicate respiratory failure like sleepy, tired, gasping, shallow and others indicate criticality and potentially the need to ventilate—especially when combined with other factors like mental status changes (see step 1) and poor skin color. Remember that the "lifeless" patient gets a C-A-B approach with a pulse check or compressions first.

FOURTH STEP

Examine Vital Signs

Vital signs are important but they are last in this list because abnormal vital signs are usually accompanied by a poor patient picture, which would be identified by steps 1 – 3. Look for abnormal vital signs and don't forget the value of poor skin color and narrowed pulse pressure as signs of criticality.

THIRD STEP

Determine Patient Complaint

Some complaints require prompt transport because of their time sensitive nature (e.g. acute coronary syndrome, stroke, serious trauma) while others have potential treatments (e.g. aspirin in chest pain patients). Take these complaints into consideration as you evaluate the question. They may be important in your answer.

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