

Life-Threatening Bleeding

Updated Position Statement

[insert month] 2026



Background

Bleeding is one of the preventable causes of death in victims of trauma. It is possible to die from bleeding in as little as five minutes – before the arrival of emergency services – making the immediate control of life-threatening bleeding a critical skill for first aid¹.

Life-threatening bleeding can be recognised by rapidly flowing or spurting blood from a wound, pooling of blood on the ground, or bleeding that cannot be controlled by direct manual pressure alone. Although direct manual pressure is the gold standard for the initial control of bleeding, the use of tourniquets and wound packing may be required for life-threatening bleeding in the first aid setting¹.

The Health and Safety Executive recommend the syllabus for Emergency First Aid at Work and First Aid at Work training.² Whilst 'administering first aid to a casualty who is wounded and bleeding' is included in the Emergency First Aid at Work syllabus, the application of tourniquets, wound packing and using haemostatic dressings for life-threatening bleeding are listed as potential additional training needs.

The skills and materials required for applying a tourniquet and packing a wound can be separated into 'improvised' and 'manufactured'. The table below gives examples:

	Tourniquet	Wound packing
Purpose	For life-threatening bleeding from an arm or leg that cannot be controlled by direct manual pressure.	For life-threatening bleeding from a deep wound that cannot be controlled by direct manual pressure.
Improvised	Applied using improvised materials, such as a triangular bandage wrapped around a limb and tightened with an improvised twisting device, such as cutlery.	Material is packed tightly into the wound to apply pressure within it to control the bleeding. Material such as bandages from a first aid kit or clothing could be used to pack the wound.
Manufactured	A commercially manufactured tourniquet is applied around a limb to stop blood flow and control the life-threatening bleeding.	A haemostatic dressing is used to pack the wound. Haemostatic dressings are impregnated with an agent that rapidly and safely clots blood.

First Aid Quality Partnership Recommendations:

- Training providers are encouraged to include training in the application of tourniquets (improvised and manufactured) and wound packing. Delivery of this training within the 6-hour Emergency First Aid at Work course is in line with HSE guidance.
- FAQP recommends that first aid training providers should teach the application of a manufactured and an improvised tourniquet and packing a wound for life-threatening haemorrhage on First Aid at Work courses as a minimum.
- Where employers undertake a first aid needs assessment that identifies workplace hazards with a specific risk of life-threatening bleeding, they should follow [HSE guidance](#) and consider provision of **manufactured** tourniquets and haemostatic dressings. Employers should confirm with their first aid training provider that the application of **manufactured** tourniquets and haemostatic techniques are included in training and assessment in addition to the standard first aid syllabus.

References

1. Zideman, D.A., Singletary, E.M., Borra, V., Cassan, P., Cimpoesu, C.D., De Buck, E., Djärv, T., Handley, A.J., Klaassen, B., Meyran, D., Oliver, E. and Poole, K. 2021. European Resuscitation Council Guidelines 2021: First aid. *Resuscitation*. 161, pp.270–290.
2. HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE, 2024. *First Aid at Work The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981*. 3rd edition edn. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l74.pdf>