



Wilderness First Aid Scenario

RESPIRATORY DISTRESS

Victim 1 – Youth With Respiratory Distress

SUMMARY

A group of Scouts is preparing for a trip to the Florida Sea Base. Scouts and adult leaders are swimming laps in the local pool in order to complete their swim tests. Suddenly, a 14-year-old Scout, Bobby, swims to the side of the pool and appears to be in distress. Several people help Bobby out of the pool. He is breathing rapidly with a loud wheeze and is very anxious.

SCENARIO DETAIL

This is a troop event at a crowded public pool with 24 Scouts, ages 11–17, and five adult leaders. There are two lifeguards on duty, but neither has noticed the Scout having difficulty. Bobby's parents are not at the pool. The first participants to respond are youth. Adult leaders arrive during the secondary assessment.

STUDENT RESPONSE

1. Scene safety:
Ensure that the scene safety assessment is completed.
2. Primary assessment:
Bobby is awake and alert, but he is also very anxious and having difficulty breathing.
3. Secondary assessment:
 - a. Physical exam: Respirations are very rapid and shallow. Bobby wheezes loudly whether inhaling or exhaling. He is unable to speak more than a few words at a time. His skin is moist due to being in the pool. His lips and fingertips look slightly blue.
 - b. Vital signs:
LOC: A&Ox4
Heart rate: 120
Respirations: 36
Skin: Pale
 - c. **SAMPLE**
S – Difficulty breathing
A – No known allergies
M – Albuterol (asthma rescue inhaler), Advair for asthma
P – Asthma
L – Breakfast; voided before entering the pool
E – Strenuous exercise; victim has not taken his asthma medication that day

POST-SCENARIO DEBRIEF

- Did any of the adults know about Bobby's history of asthma?
- Did the adult leaders have the troop members' AHMRs with them?
- What signs and symptoms did you find?
Rapid, shallow breathing with severe wheezing. Rapid heart rate. Lips and fingertips were blue. The victim had difficulty speaking and was very anxious.
- What is the individual's problem?
A history of asthma, for which he has not taken his medication that day. Treatment is his rescue inhaler.



+ Wilderness First Aid Scenario **Respiratory Distress**

- How can this scenario be prevented?
Be familiar with each participant's AHMR before an event. Adult leaders can remind youth to carry rescue inhalers with them and take as prescribed.
- How would you provide care?
Send for help. Look for the victim's rescue inhaler. Determine the cause of the respiratory distress—asthma. Reassure the victim and try to slow his breathing. If the inhaler is located, assist the victim in taking the medication. Do not lay the patient down—allow for a position of comfort, which is typically a tripod stance: hands on knees and leaning forward. Be prepared to administer rescue breathing and/or CPR if needed.
- Did anyone seek help? Since the troop was in an urban setting, did they call 911? What would happen if they were in a remote location?
- Was the rescue inhaler nearby? Did the responders assist the victim with the inhaler?
Some camps require an asthmatic Scout to bring two rescue inhalers. Remind everyone to make sure this is done before leaving for an event and to check expiration dates on the medication.
- What would happen if the victim did not have his medication nearby?
- Was someone preparing for the possibility of performing CPR if the Scout's status deteriorated? Did they have equipment nearby? Were they trained in CPR?
- Did the responders consider safety issues?
This would include personal protective equipment: disposable nonlatex gloves and a CPR face shield. Also, the victim should be moved away from the water.

Note to instructor: Vital signs would deteriorate the longer treatment is delayed. Include these changes in the scenario as it unfolds.