There are two form of hypertension in which the blood pressure is treated independently of other conditions:

1. Hypertensive encephalopathy is severely elevated blood pressure associated with altered mental status and confusion, nausea and vomiting, neck and head pain. These same findings can also be associated with stroke, cerebral aneurysm, subarachnoid hemorrhage, and other intracranial bleed or mass.
2. Malignant hypertension is severely elevated blood pressure associated with chest pain, shortness of breath, abdominal or flank pain, back pain, leg pain, cool distal extremities with poor pulses. These same findings can also be associated with aortic dissection, abdominal aortic aneurysm (not ruptured), cardiomyopathy, heart failure, and renal failure.

Information Needed

1. Prior diagnosis, medication for its treatment, compliant or noncompliant, sinus medication use, recent seizure, drug abuse especially methamphetamine and cocaine, alcohol withdrawal, and associated symptoms and signs that make the hypertension dangerous.

Treatment

1. Vital signs and apply O_2.
2. Cardiac monitor.
3. Altered mental status? Check glucose.
4. IV access.
5. If systolic BP > 250 or diastolic BP > 120, consult medical control for any interventions.
6. Treatment of a specific cause or a specific symptom may reduce the blood pressure. For example phenergan for nausea/vomiting or haldol/ativan for drug agitation.

Notes

1. Elevated blood pressure seldom needs prehospital treatment.
2. Try to determine the cause of the elevated blood pressure. That cause may be amenable to pre-hospital treatment; see protocol related to that cause.

Hypertension

3. Some symptoms such as chest pain or shortness of breath may need treatment; see protocol related to that symptom.

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