

Kittitas County Prehospital Care Protocols

Subject: DECOMPRESSION OF A PNEUMOTHORAX

Suspected Tension Pneumothorax

In the event of a suspected tension pneumothorax, and the patient is deteriorating rapidly, perform the following:

- A. Prepare all necessary equipment.
- B. Identify the second intercostal space at the mid-clavicular line or the fifth intercostal space at the mid-axillary line.
- C. Cleanse and prep the site with Pouldone-iodine.
- D. Use a 12 ga catheter over-the-needle (16 ga for pediatric patients) device, attached to a one-way flutter valve, or an MPD-approved commercial device.
- E. Insert the needle above the third rib, into the second intercostal space, until you hear a “pop.”
- F. Advance the catheter an additional 1-2 cm, and withdraw the needle (or as recommended by the manufacturer, if using a commercial device).
- G. Secure with tape and an occlusive dressing.
- H. Continually monitor lung sounds and respiratory status.

Effective Date: September 29, 1999

Medical Program Director: