Breathing Problems

Causes of breathing problems:

- Asthma: the air passages become narrowed; it may be triggered by stress or physical activity.
- Anaphylactic shock
- Choking
- Medical illnesses such as pneumonia, bronchitis
- Hyperventilation, which leads to rapid breathing.

Be aware that complications in other bodily systems, such as heart attack, stroke, and seizure, can also cause breathing difficulties.

Signs of breathing problems:

- Fast or shallow breathing
- Noisy breathing sound or whistle when inhaling or exhaling
- Inability to talk due to breathlessness.

Causes of hyperventilation:

- Strong emotions (fear, anxiety)
- Asthma
- Trauma of head
- Exercise
- Life threatening bleeding

Signs and symptoms of hyperventilation:

- Rapid, shallow breathing
- A feeling of suffocating or not getting enough air
- Fear, anxiety, or confusion
- Dizziness
- Numbness or tingling in the fingers and toes
- Muscle contractions, usually in the hands, feet, arms, and legs

Treatment of breathing problems:

- If asthma, help the person use Ventolin, an asthma inhaler.
- If anaphylactic shock, please refer to the anaphylactic shock protocol.
- If choking, please refer to the choking protocol.
- If hyperventilation, encourage slow, deep breathing: inhale through the nose for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, and exhale slowly for 6-8 seconds. The American Heart Association does not recommend breathing into a bag during an anxiety attack, as it can worsen oxygen levels if

hyperventilation is caused by an underlying issue, such as a heart or lung problem. Breathing into a bag may exacerbate hypoxia in individuals with heart or lung conditions.

- Monitor the person's breathing and saturation.
- If he or she is still unable to breathe properly, send him or her to the ER.