San Mateo County Emergency Medical Services

Dystonic Reaction

For suspected dystonic reaction (i.e., reaction, typically from antipsychotic medications, causing abnormal contraction of head and neck muscles)

History
• Medical history
• Medications
• Abuse or recreational use of prescription medications

Signs and Symptoms
• Restlessness
• Muscle spasms of the neck, jaw and back
• Oculogyric crisis
• Speech difficulties

Differential
• Trauma
• Stroke
• Tumor
• Hypoxia
• Infection
• Drug reactions
• Poisoning

Diphenhydramine

Obtain vital signs
Supplemental oxygen to maintain SpO₂ >92%
Pulse oximetry
Cardiac montior
Establish IV/IO

Monitor and reassess

Notify receiving facility. Consider Base Hospital for medical direction

Pearls
• Common drugs implicated in dystonic reactions include many anti-emetics and anti-psychotic medications including, but not limited to:
  • Prochlorperazine (Compazine)
  • Haloperidol (Haldol)
  • Metoclopramide (Reglan)
  • Promethazine (Phenergan)
  • Fluphenazine (Prolixin)
  • Chlorpromazine (Thorazine)
  • Many other anti-psychotic and anti-emetic drugs

Effective November 2018
Treatment Protocol X04
Effective April 2023