Restart a Heart education resource

What is shock?

The term ‘shock ‘refers to both emotional (psychological) shock and medical shock (physiological). It is the medical form of shock we will be looking at here.

Your body can experience shock when it is affected by an illness or injury that prevents enough blood circulating around your system to keep your organs and tissues healthy.

Causes of shock

Task 1

Look at the list of illnesses and injuries below and determine which are causes of shock.

Dehydration	**Punctured lung**	**Anaphylaxis (allergic)**
Burns	**Heart failure**	**Heart attack**
Internal blood loss	**Sepsis (severe infection)**	**Drug toxicity**
Vomiting	**Spinal cord injury**	**External blood loss**

Task 2

Once you have determined which illnesses you think are causes of shock, next you need to divide them up in to the types of shock using the definitions below.

Types of shock

Hypovolaemic - When there is not enough blood in your blood vessels to distribute oxygen to your organs.

Cardiogenic - Caused by damage to the heart which in turn affects the blood flow to your body.

Obstructive - When blood can’t reach where it needs to go.

Distributive - This affects the tone of your blood vessels. When they lose their tone they become floppy and unable to maintain your blood pressure.

Answers

All the illnesses and injuries listed cause shock.

Illness/injury	Which type of shock is caused?
Dehydration	Hypovolaemic
Burns	Hypovolaemic
Internal blood loss	Hypovolaemic
Vomiting	Hypovolaemic
Punctured lung	Obstructive
Heart failure	Cardiogenic
Sepsis (severe infection)	Distributive
Spinal cord injury	Distributive
Anaphylaxis (allergic)	Distributive
Heart attack	Cardiogenic
Drug toxicity	Distributive
External blood loss	Hypovolaemic

Shock is a medical emergency caused by your organs not getting enough blood and oxygen. It has nothing to do with the 'shock' we feel when something scares or upsets us. When your body can't get enough blood to your organs, those organs start shutting down. Your blood pressure is very low when you're in shock.