

Proven to save lives

Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) is recognized throughout the world as the leading continuing education program for prehospital emergency trauma care. First offered in 1983, the program has trained more than 700,000 EMS practitioners to date. Although PHTLS originated in the United States, it now is available internationally to EMS practitioners in more than 55 countries.

Created by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT), in cooperation with the Committee on Trauma of the American College of Surgeons (ACS/COT), PHTLS teaches clinically proven principles of trauma care modified for the prehospital situation, offering a uniquely scientific approach that decreases patient morbidity and mortality.

The course promotes critical thinking as the foundation for providing quality care and stresses treatment of multi-system trauma in the field, which may require an approach that varies from traditional treatment modalities. The program is built on the belief that, well armed with a solid base of clinical knowledge and principles of care, EMS practitioners and other prehospital emergency care providers are fully able to make sound decisions regarding patient care.

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) Committee on Trauma provides medical direction and content oversight. The course is based on the ACS Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) program. The PHTLS course is continuously updated and revised to keep up with advances in the field, ATLS guidelines and feedback from course participants, and is fully reviewed and revised every four years.



The PHTLS course

Worldwide, more than 5 million people die each year from trauma, with motor vehicle injuries as the leading cause. In fact, trauma is the leading cause of death in those ages 1 through 44.

Through interactive scenario stations and group discussion and review, PHTLS addresses critical thinking and scientifically proven principles in multi-system trauma care.

Students who take PHTLS will learn to:

- Describe the physiology and kinematics of injury.
- Understand the need for rapid assessment of the trauma patient.
- Transport patients to the appropriate medical facility depending on their injuries.
- Advance their level of knowledge in regard to examination and diagnostic skills.
- Enhance their performance in the assessment and treatment of the trauma patient.
- Advance their level of competence in regard to specific prehospital trauma intervention skills.
- Provide an overview and establish a management method for the prehospital care of the multisystem trauma patient.

Student skills are tested at the end of the course through a written test and hands-on scenario evaluations.

The PHTLS curriculum

The course builds upon each participant's current knowledge base and skills to enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, stresses teamwork between providers with diverse levels of knowledge, skills, and resources, and offers a safe environment in which students can practice trauma assessment and treatment skills.

Stressing that it's crucial to deliver the patient 1) to the right facility 2) using the right mode of transport 3) in the right amount of time, and 4) as safely as possible, the curriculum covers the following in depth:

- **Assessment** — Covers scene assessment and primary patient assessment, emphasizing safety of practitioners and patients and taking a global view of the scene. Teaches practitioners how to identify immediate life-threatening conditions and situations to the patient and best management, including mechanisms of injury and primary baseline patient assessment - A: Airway; B: Breathing, Ventilation and Oxygenation; C: Circulation, Hemorrhage Control and Shock; and D: Disability and Exposure. While assessment techniques are taught sequentially, they are performed simultaneously.
- **Secondary survey/Reassessment** — While knowing when to take action is important, knowing when not to take immediate clinical action is even more important, i.e., when to treat at the scene versus en route. Reassessment includes a secondary head-to-toe survey as time allows to evaluate vital signs and non life-threatening injuries, as well as changes in the patient's status.

Participants learn how to best identify and treat often hidden life-threatening injuries, including multiple components such as evaluating pulse, respiration, blood pressure and skin parameters in combination. Also covers treatment options, patient comfort measures and transport of multiple patients.

- **Team approach** — Addresses how a diverse team must work together to provide patients with the best chances for favorable outcomes. This team can include system activation, citizens, dispatch, first responders, EMS, transport services, emergency department, surgery, other specialty services and rehabilitation.

- **Communication** — Discusses timely, clear, concise, accurate, and complete verbal and written communication among all team members, which is critical to ensuring optimal patient care. Good documentation is required to maintain a record of continuity of care with the receiving hospital, for medical and legal reasons, for trauma research and to support trauma system funding.

- **Potential pitfalls** — Addresses avoidance of issues such as not establishing a safe scene, overlooking life-threatening conditions and situations by not adequately exposing the patient, focusing on distracting injuries, performing a secondary survey prior to stabilizing life threats, not maintaining body temperature, performing advanced interventions before basic procedures, prolonged scene times, overlooking signs of deterioration in an initially noncritical patient, failure to reassess, and destination decision errors.

- **Airway** — Covers airway anatomy, pediatric considerations, assessment, injury and dysfunction, direct airway trauma and inhalation injuries. Offers an in-depth review of procedures and adjuncts, supraglottic and glottic airway management techniques, endotracheal intubation and surgical airways, tube placement and airway protocols.

- **Breathing, ventilation and oxygenation** — Teaches the location and function of chest anatomy and supporting structures, an understanding of the relationship between normal breathing and supported positive pressure ventilation, common traumatic injuries that affect breathing, signs to look for, in-depth assessment and diagnosis of various airway injuries including simple versus tension pneumothorax, and treatment options, including ventilation and needle chest decompressions.
- **Circulation, hemorrhage control and shock** — Covers anatomy and metabolism, the pathophysiology, mechanisms and assessment of the three different types of shock: hypovolemic, distributive and cardiogenic, especially when there is no clear cause. Also covers hypoperfusion and consequences in the body, hypoxia, penetrating and blunt injuries, with special attention to those most commonly effecting shock, shock management and reduction of complications, and the maintenance of energy production at the cellular level.
- **Central nervous system trauma: Injuries to the brain and spinal cord** — Addresses the anatomy of the brain and spinal column, head, brain and spinal trauma, spinal immobilization, secondary injury, brain metabolism and perfusion, intracranial pressure and its clinical effects, complete neurological exam, management and pathophysiology of CNS trauma to include the kinematics of trauma to the brain and spine.
- **Special considerations** — Awareness of the unique aspects of pediatric, geriatric, and multiple patients optimizes patient management and outcomes. Addresses special considerations in treating these groups, including anatomic differences, trauma resuscitation issues, ABCs of patient assessment, respiratory issues, burns, extended or delayed transport, and sufficient resources.

Accreditations

All NAEMT continuing education courses are accredited by the Continuing Education Coordinating Board for Emergency Medical Services (CECBEMS).

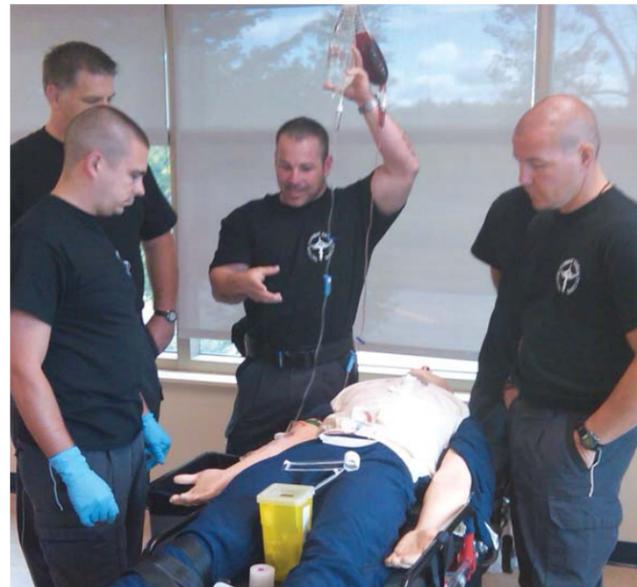
They also are recognized for recertification requirements by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT).

Find or conduct a course

PHTLS courses are conducted worldwide.

If you are a student interested in taking this course, please visit the Education section of www.naemt.org to use our course locator to find a course in your area.

If you are a course site, to learn more about conducting a PHTLS course, please call 1-800-346-2368.



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NAEMT is the nation's only professional association representing all EMS practitioners, including paramedics, emergency medical technicians, first responders and other professionals working in prehospital emergency medicine.

Through its industry-leading EMS continuing education courses, NAEMT annually helps more than 46,000 EMS practitioners provide better care and save more lives.

Helping save lives one course at a time

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