

# ATLS for MBBS Students

## The First 10 Minutes That Save Lives

### Why ATLS Matters

Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) provides a systematic approach to trauma care. The objective is simple: identify and treat life-threatening injuries before focusing on fractures and other secondary problems.

### The Golden Hour

The first hour following major trauma is critical. Early recognition and intervention can significantly improve outcomes.

### Primary Survey: ABCDE

#### A – Airway with Cervical Spine Protection

- Assess airway patency
- Look for obstruction, facial trauma, stridor
- Protect the cervical spine in all trauma patients until cleared

#### B – Breathing

Assess: • Respiratory rate

- Chest expansion
- Oxygen saturation
- Breath sounds Immediately identify: • Tension pneumothorax
- Open pneumothorax
- Massive hemothorax

#### C – Circulation

Assess: • Pulse

- Blood pressure
- Capillary refill
- External bleeding Control hemorrhage immediately. Remember: Shock in trauma is hemorrhagic until proven otherwise.

#### D – Disability

Rapid neurological assessment: • GCS Score

- Pupil size and reaction
- Limb movement

#### E – Exposure and Environment

- Fully expose the patient

- Examine systematically
- Prevent hypothermia

### **Secondary Survey**

Performed only after the patient is stabilized. Head-to-toe examination including: • History (AMPLE)  
• Detailed physical examination • Imaging and investigations

### **AMPLE History**

A – Allergies

M – Medications

P – Past Medical History

L – Last Meal

E – Events Leading to Injury

### **Trauma Imaging Essentials**

Classic trauma series: • Chest X-ray

- Pelvis X-ray
- FAST Scan CT imaging when indicated and patient stable.

### **Orthopaedic Trauma Pearls**

- Splint fractures early
- Assess neurovascular status before and after splinting
- Always examine joints above and below a fracture
- Look for compartment syndrome

### **Common MBBS Viva Questions**

1. What are the steps of ATLS?
2. What is the Golden Hour?
3. What does AMPLE stand for?
4. What is the first priority in trauma care?
5. What is the primary survey?

### **Rapid Revision Box**

A → Airway

B → Breathing

C → Circulation

D → Disability

E → Exposure Never jump to fractures before completing ABCDE.

### **Life in Orthopaedics Take Home Message**

A missed fracture can disable a patient. A missed airway can kill a patient. In trauma care, save life

first, save limb second, and restore function third.

*Dr Arnav Kadian | Life in Orthopaedics | Where Healing Meets Movement*