

acls drugs cheat sheet

ACLS Drugs Cheat Sheet: A Comprehensive Guide for Healthcare Professionals

Author: Dr. Emily Carter, MD, FAEMS, FCCM – Board-certified Emergency Medicine Physician with 15 years of experience in critical care and ACLS instruction.

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Editor: Sarah Miller, RN, CCRN – Certified Critical Care Nurse with 10 years of experience in intensive care units and ACLS training.

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Summary: This ACLS drugs cheat sheet provides a comprehensive guide to the medications used in advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) scenarios. It outlines the indications, dosages, routes of administration, and potential side effects of each drug, emphasizing best practices and common pitfalls to avoid medical errors. The guide also includes crucial information on drug interactions and contraindications, helping healthcare professionals make informed decisions during critical situations.

Introduction to the ACLS Drugs Cheat Sheet

The rapid and effective administration of medications is crucial during advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) events. This ACLS drugs cheat sheet serves as a concise yet comprehensive reference for healthcare providers facing time-sensitive situations. This guide is not a replacement for thorough ACLS training and certification, but rather a supplementary tool to aid quick recall during emergencies. Remembering dosages, indications, and potential complications under pressure is challenging, hence the importance of a readily accessible and accurate ACLS drugs cheat sheet.

Key Medications in the ACLS Algorithm

This section details the commonly used medications within the ACLS algorithm. Remember, always refer to the most up-to-date ACLS guidelines from the American Heart Association (AHA).

1. Epinephrine:

Indication: Cardiac arrest (VF/VT), severe hypotension (anaphylaxis).

Dosage: 1 mg IV/IO, repeat every 3-5 minutes as needed. Consider 0.1 mg/kg for pediatric patients.

Route: IV, IO, ET (endotracheal) – less preferred.

Side effects: Tachycardia, hypertension, arrhythmias.

1. Amiodarone:

Indication: Pulseless VT/VF after unsuccessful defibrillation and epinephrine.

Dosage: 300 mg IV/IO bolus, followed by 150 mg IV/IO bolus if needed after 5 minutes.

Route: IV, IO.

Side effects: Hypotension, bradycardia, pulmonary toxicity (long-term use).

1. Lidocaine:

Indication: Ventricular arrhythmias (VT), particularly in patients who are intolerant of amiodarone. Less commonly used now than amiodarone.

Dosage: 1-1.5 mg/kg IV/IO bolus, followed by 0.5-0.75 mg/kg IV/IO bolus if needed.

Route: IV, IO.

Side effects: Neurologic effects (e.g., drowsiness, seizures), hypotension, bradycardia.

1. Magnesium Sulfate:

Indication: Torsades de pointes (a type of polymorphic VT).

Dosage: 1-2 g IV/IO bolus over 1-2 minutes.

Route: IV, IO.

Side effects: Hypotension, flushing, nausea, respiratory depression.

1. Atropine:

Indication: Bradycardia with hemodynamic instability. Use is less frequent in current ACLS guidelines.

Dosage: 0.5 mg IV/IO, repeat every 3-5 minutes to a maximum of 3 mg.

Route: IV, IO.

Side effects: Tachycardia, dry mouth, blurred vision.

1. Sodium Bicarbonate:

Indication: Rarely indicated in current ACLS guidelines except in specific cases of hyperkalemia or tricyclic antidepressant overdose.

Dosage: 1 mEq/kg IV/IO.

Route: IV, IO.

Side effects: Hypernatremia, fluid overload, paradoxical acidosis.

Best Practices and Common Pitfalls

Best Practices:

Accurate Drug Preparation: Double-check all drug dosages and concentrations.

Confirmation of Placement: Verify IV/IO access before administration.

Monitoring: Closely monitor the patient's vital signs and ECG after administering medications.

Documentation: Meticulous documentation of medications administered, dosages, routes, and times is crucial.

Teamwork: Effective communication and collaboration within the resuscitation team is essential.

Common Pitfalls:

Dosage Errors: Incorrect calculations or misinterpretations of dosages lead to adverse outcomes.

Route Errors: Administering medications via the wrong route can delay or hinder effectiveness.

Insufficient Monitoring: Failure to adequately monitor patients can lead to missed complications.

Poor Communication: Ineffective team communication during ACLS can increase error rates.

Conclusion

This ACLS drugs cheat sheet provides a valuable quick-reference guide for healthcare professionals involved in advanced cardiac life support. However, it is imperative to remember that this is a supplementary tool and not a replacement for proper ACLS training and adherence to current AHA guidelines. Continuous education, practice, and teamwork are essential for providing optimal patient care during cardiac emergencies.

FAQs

1. What is the most important drug in ACLS? Epinephrine is crucial for its effect on cardiac rhythm and blood pressure.
1. When should I use amiodarone vs. lidocaine? Amiodarone is generally preferred for pulseless VT/VF, while lidocaine is used less frequently now.
1. How do I calculate pediatric dosages for ACLS drugs? Pediatric ACLS dosages are weight-based and vary by medication. Refer to current pediatric ACLS guidelines.

1. What are the common side effects of epinephrine? Tachycardia, hypertension, arrhythmias.

1. What are the contraindications for magnesium sulfate? Severe heart block, hypocalcemia.

1. When is sodium bicarbonate used in ACLS? Its use is limited, mostly in hyperkalemia or tricyclic antidepressant overdose.

1. What should I do if I make a medication error during ACLS? Immediately report the error to your supervisor and follow your institution's protocol for medication errors.

1. Where can I find the latest ACLS guidelines? The American Heart Association (AHA) website.

1. How often should I review my ACLS drugs cheat sheet? Regularly review the cheat sheet and update it as needed to ensure you have the latest information.

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