

Wound Packing Essentials

A wound that's deep and bloody, with bleeding that doesn't respond to direct pressure, is a good candidate for wound packing.

Step 1: Stop the bleeding. Now!

Immediately apply direct pressure to the wound, using gauze, clean cloth, elbow, knee — whatever it takes to slow or stop the hemorrhage — until you have time to get out your wound packing supplies.

Place your gloved fingers — with or without a dressing — into the wound to apply initial pressure to the target area (with your target being the vein, artery or both) and compress the source of bleeding.

Whenever possible, utilize a bone to assist with bleeding control.



Step 2: Pack the wound with gauze. Tightly!

Your goal is to completely and tightly pack the wound cavity to stop hemorrhage. Using either hemostatic or plain gauze, begin packing the gauze into the wound with your finger, while simultaneously maintaining pressure on the wound.

It's critical that the gauze be packed **as deeply into the wound as possible** to put the gauze into direct contact with the bleeding vessel. By doing so, you're simultaneously putting direct pressure onto the bleeding vessel and allowing the hemostatic agent to work.

Step 3: Keep packing!

The key to successful wound packing is that the wound be **very tightly packed**, applying as much pressure as possible to the bleeding vessel. This pressure against the vessel is the most important component of hemorrhage control.

This explains why plain gauze (without an impregnated hemostatic agent), when tightly packed, is also quite effective.



Step 4: Apply firm pressure!

Apply **very firm pressure to the packed wound for 3-8 minutes**. This step pushes the packing firmly against the bleeding vessel and aids in clotting.

Step 5: Secure a snug pressure dressing and transport.

After applying pressure for 3-8 minutes, **place a snug pressure dressing over the wound**. You may consider splinting or immobilizing the area, if possible because movement during transport can dislodge the packing and allow hemorrhage to restart.



Step 6: Check for continued hemorrhage.

Should the bleeding continue, hemostatic gauze manufacturers **recommend removal of the original packing and repacking with fresh gauze**. The rationale for this is that they assume it wasn't packed properly the first time, or perhaps the packing didn't quite get to the bleeding vessel.

For additional information about Stop The Bleed, go to:
<https://www.dhs.gov/stopthebleed>
 or use your QR reader to go to the website straight away:



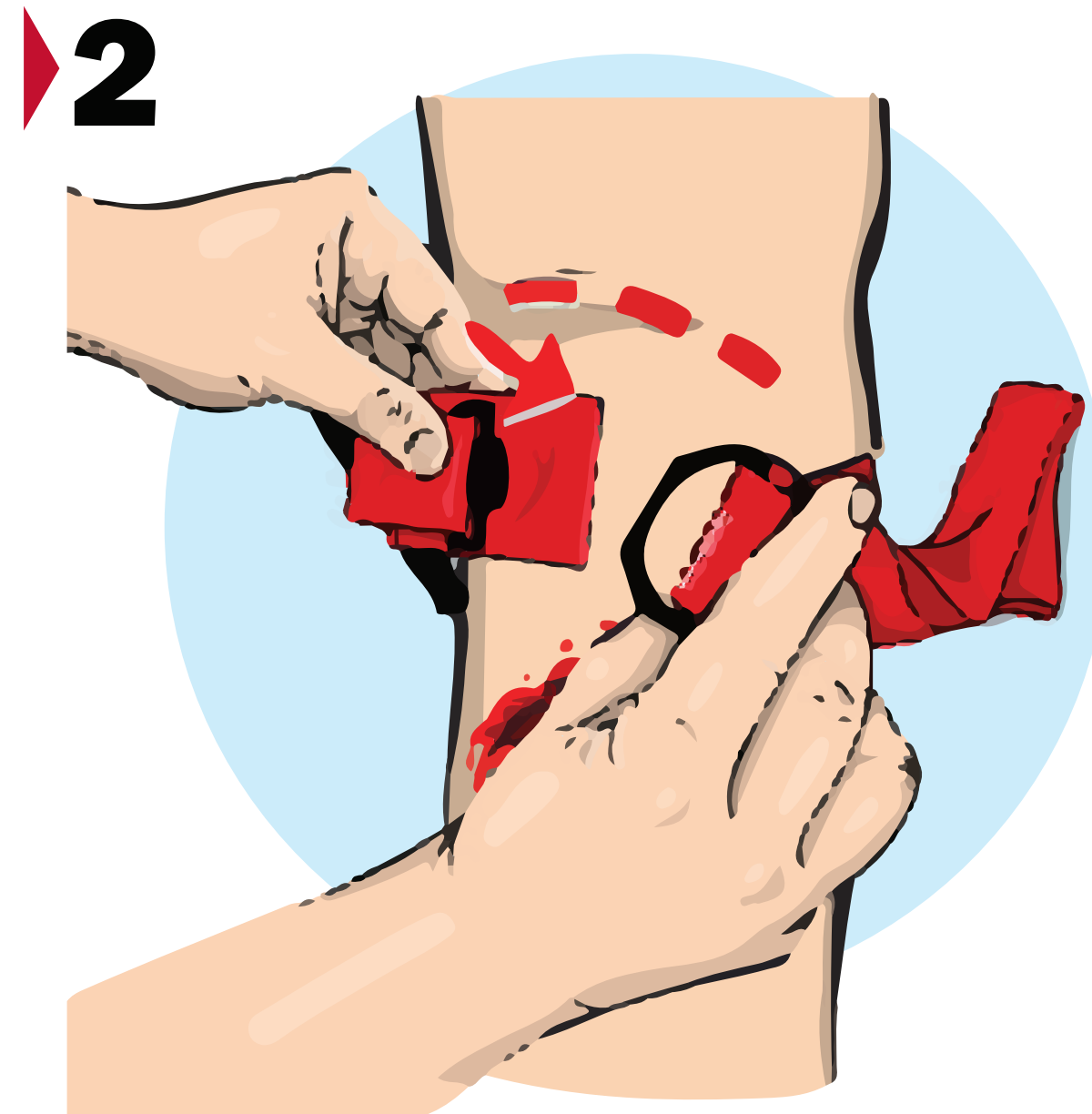
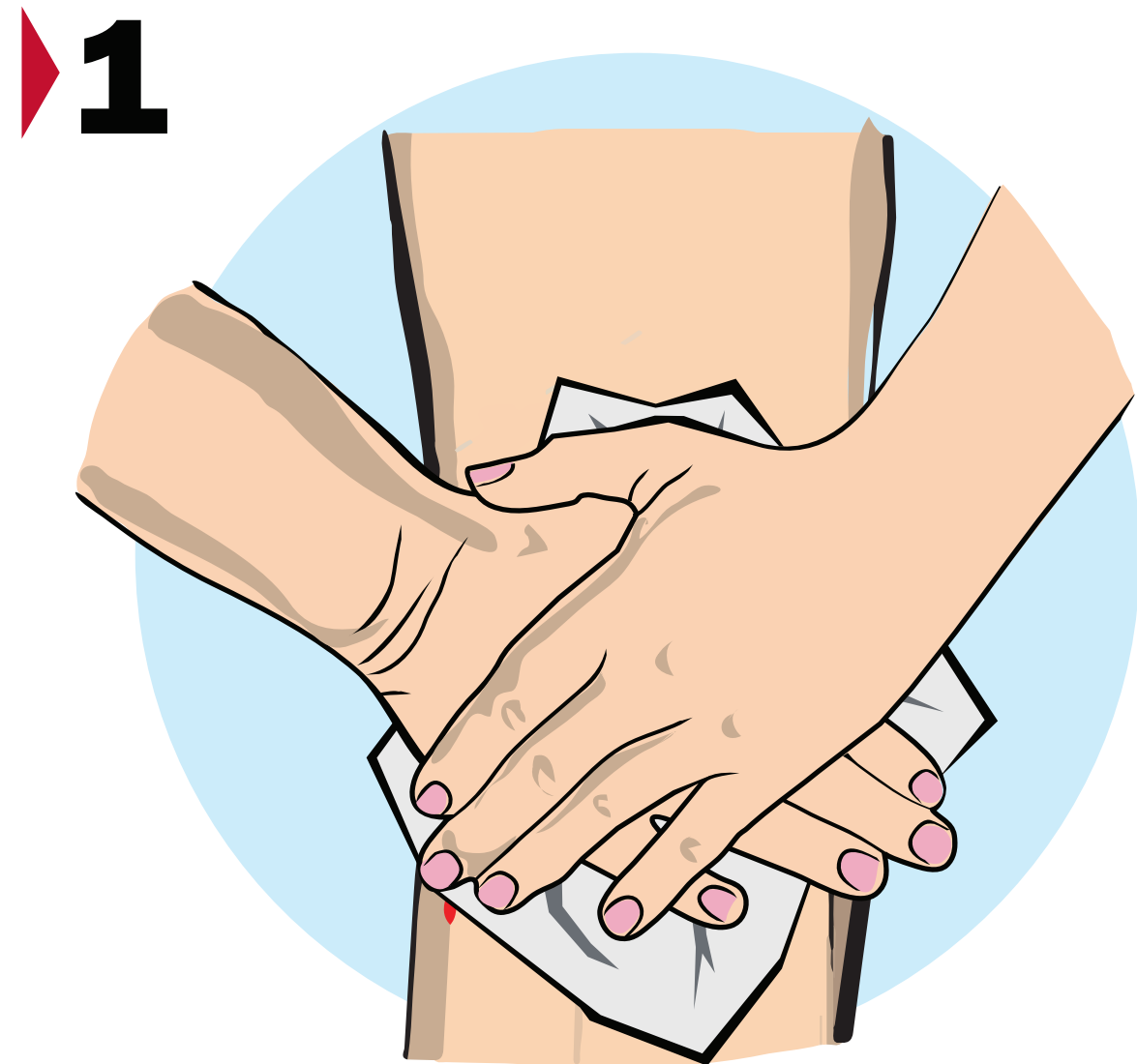
Special thanks to Dr. Peter P. Taillac, FACEP; Scotty Bolleter, BS, EMT-P [P]; and A.J. Heightman, MPA, EMT-P for content. Photos are courtesy of A.J. Heightman, MPA, EMT-P/Pennwell Corporation

Applying a Tourniquet

A wound that's on the leg or arm and won't stop bleeding is a good candidate for a tourniquet.

Step 1: Stop the bleeding. Now!

Expose the wound. Tear clothing away. Immediately apply firm, direct pressure to the wound — using gauze, clean cloth, an elbow, hand, or knee — whatever it takes to slow or stop the hemorrhage. If the pressure does not stop the bleeding, and the dressing becomes soaked with blood, you will need to apply a tourniquet.

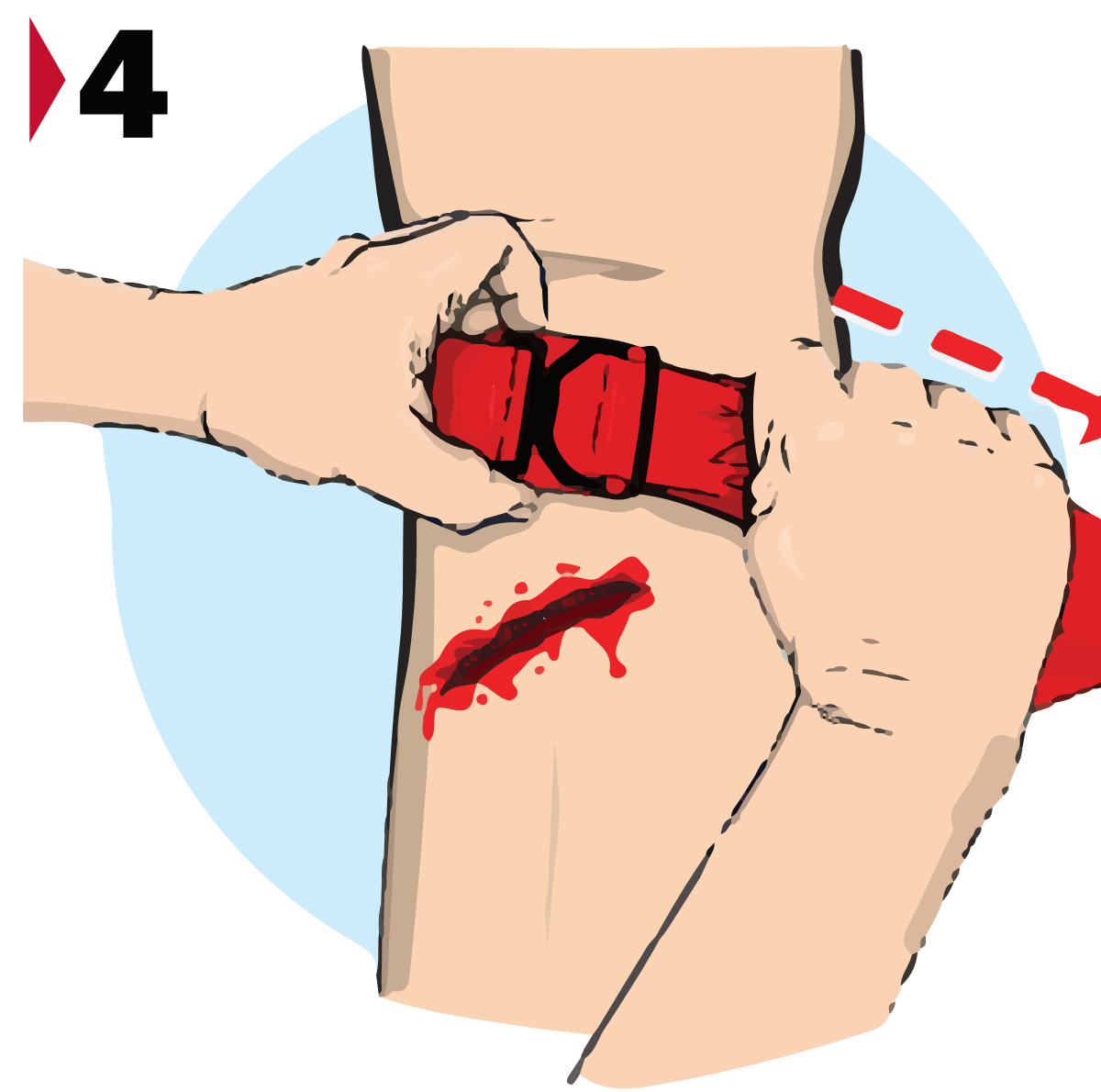
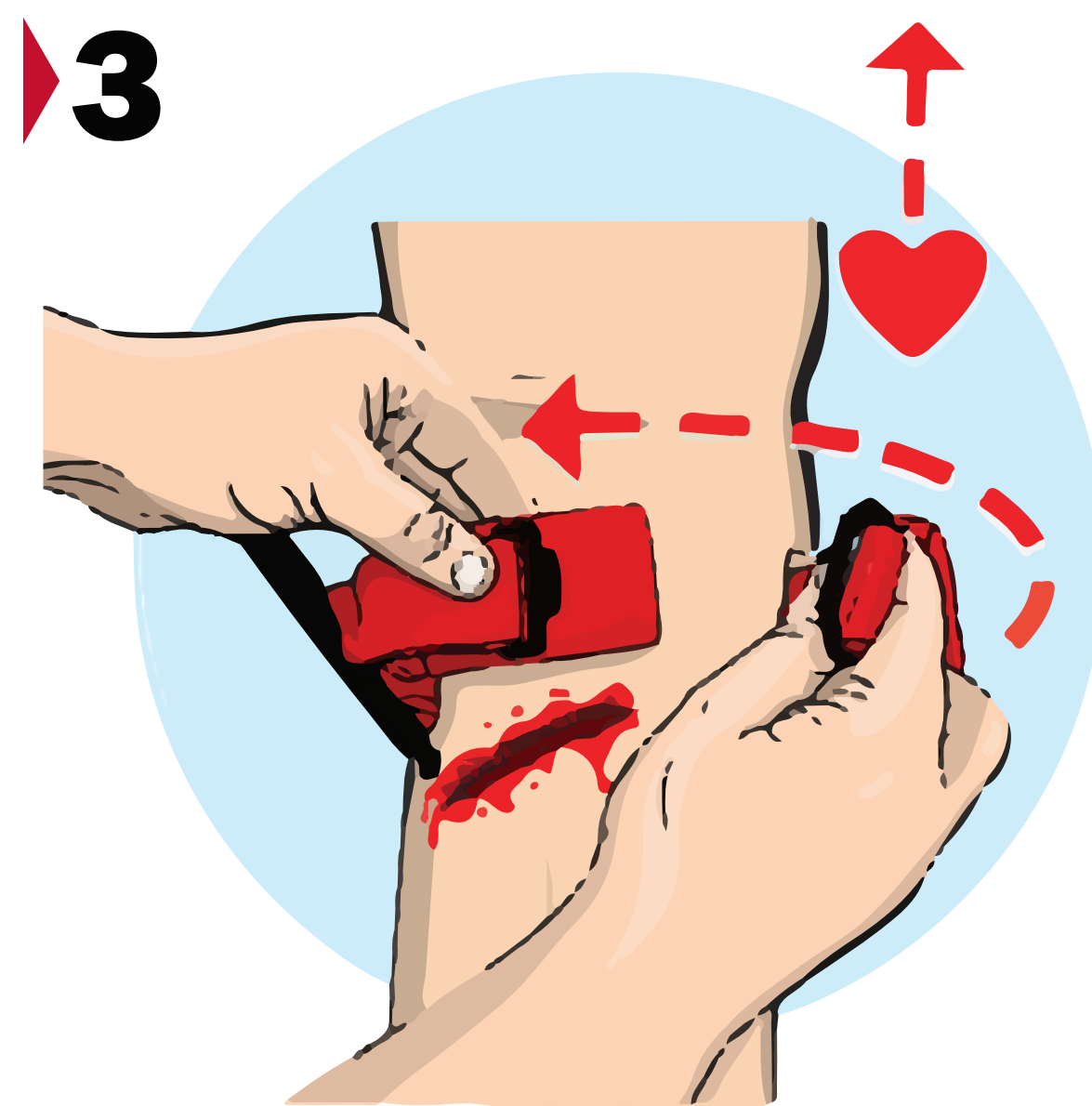


Step 2: Apply the Tourniquet

If the bleeding doesn't stop, place a tourniquet at least 2-3 inches above the wound. The tourniquet may be applied and secured over clothing.

Step 3: Adjust the tourniquet.

Be sure the tourniquet is at least 2-3 inches from the wound. Do not apply a tourniquet over a joint; such as an elbow, knee, wrist, or ankle. Joints protect blood passageways and will not allow you to apply pressure on an artery.

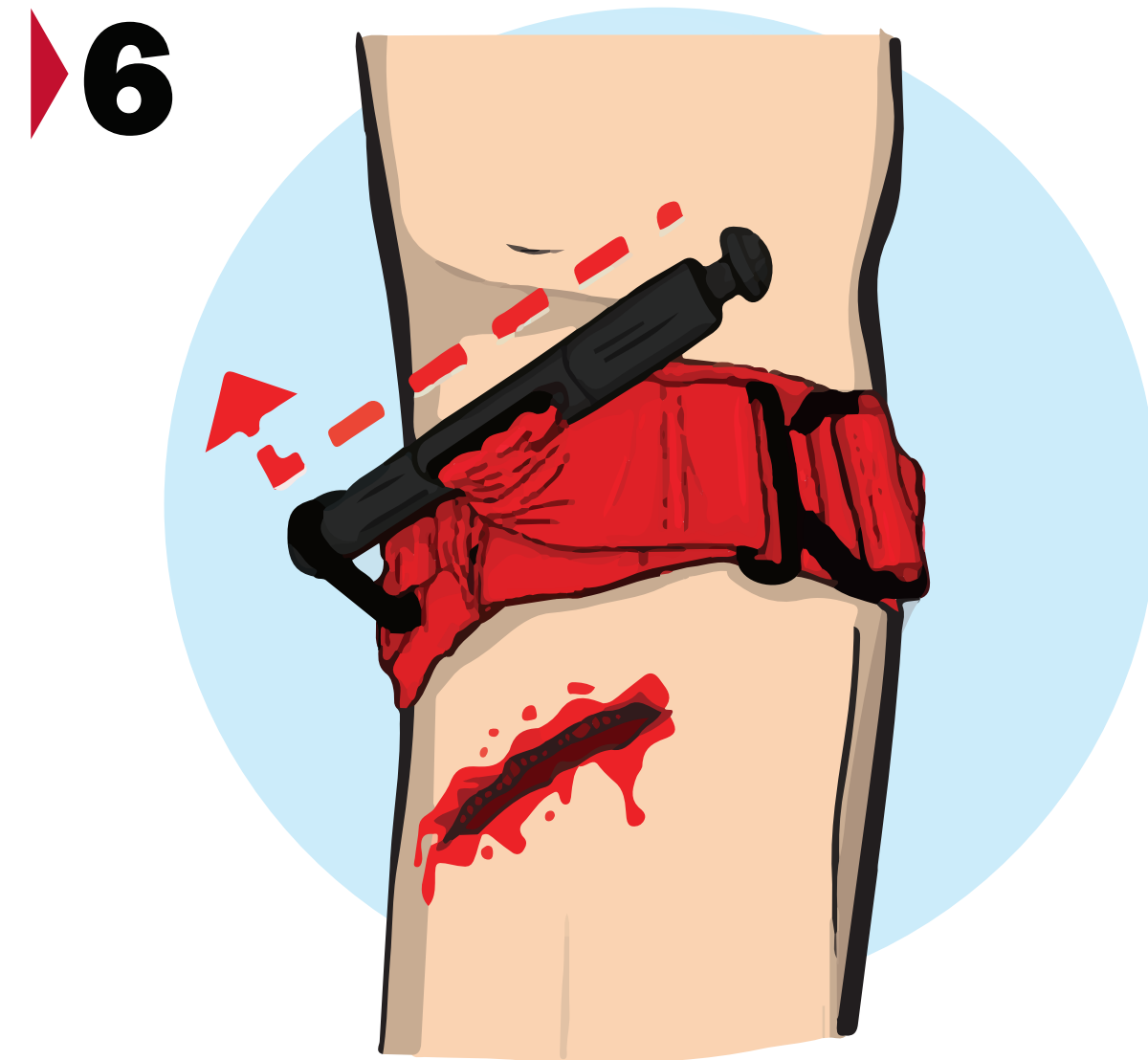
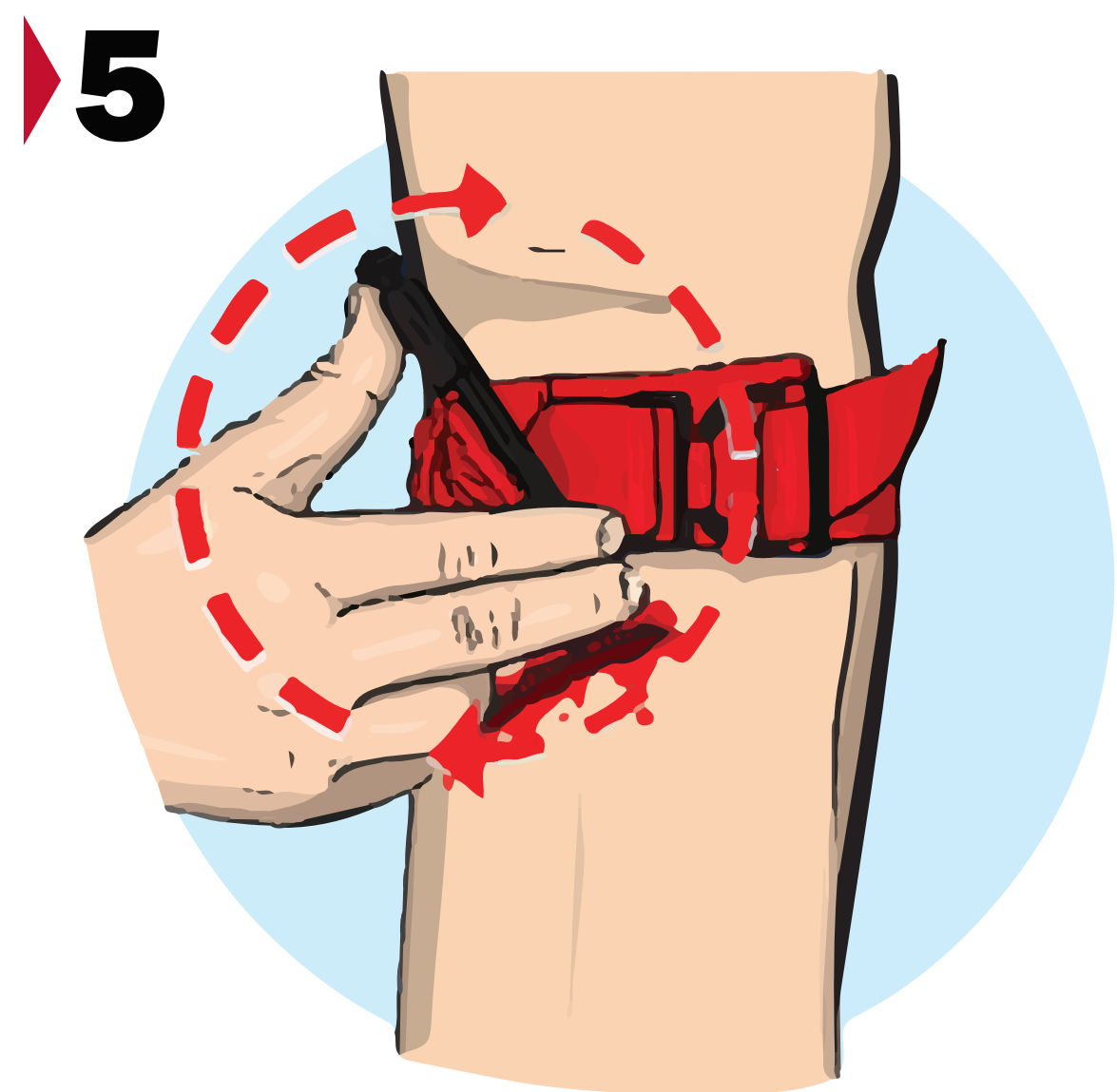


Step 4: Manually tighten the tourniquet

Clip the sides of the tourniquet together using the buckle and pull firmly on the end strap. Tighten it as much as you can.

Step 5: Use the windlass rod to further tighten the tourniquet.

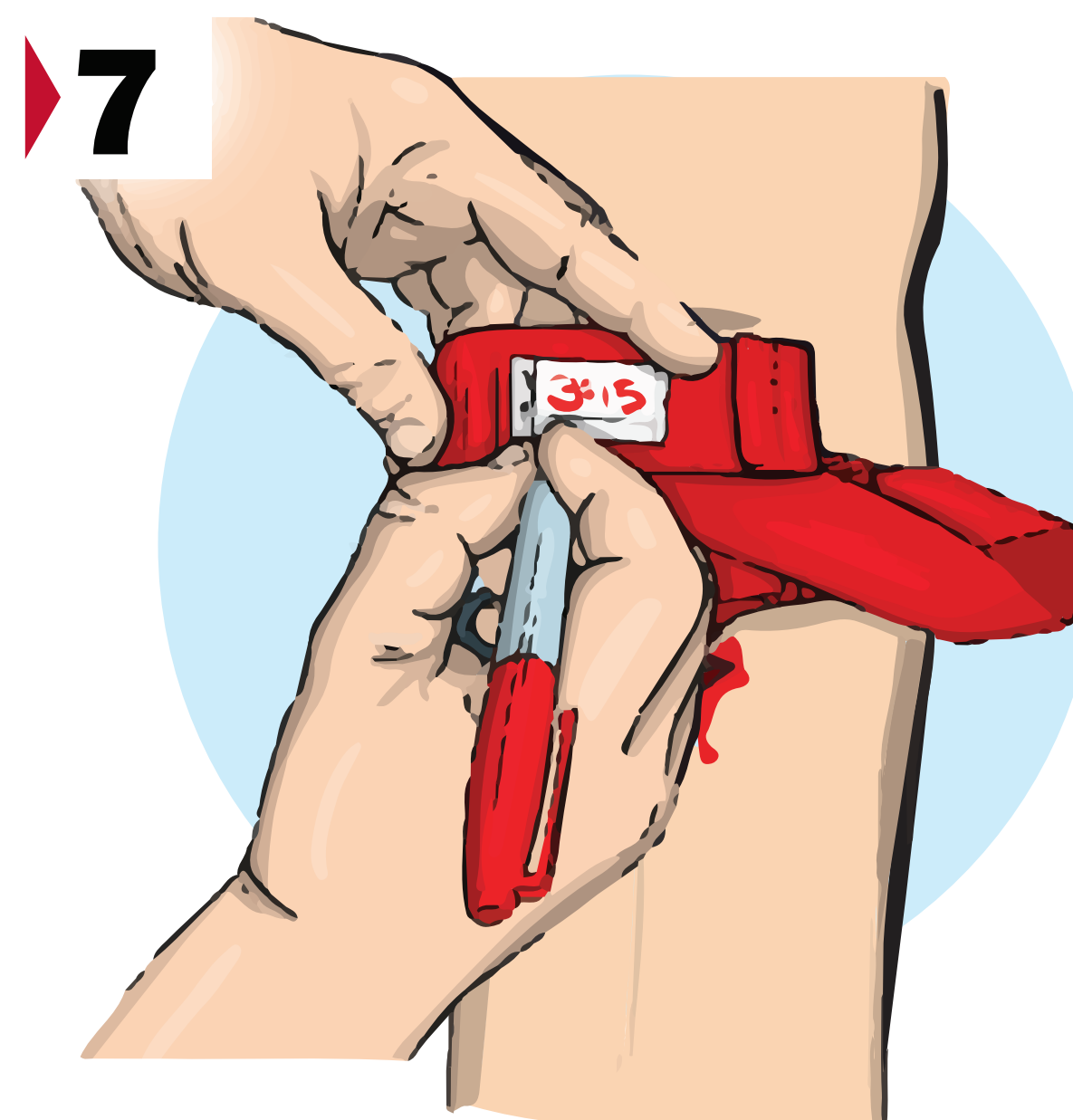
Twist the windlass rod in one direction to increase the pressure and the bleeding stops.



Step 6: Secure the windlass rod.

Using the windlass clip, secure the rod so that it does not unwind.

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Step 7: Make a note of the time.

It's important to note what time the tourniquet was applied. Leaving a tourniquet on too long can cause damage to the tissue and a time-stamp will help them know which patients to treat first.