

# Malignant Hyperthermia Quick Guide for RNs

## What is Malignant Hyperthermia (MH)?

Malignant hyperthermia (MH) is a rare, life-threatening reaction to certain anesthetics, with symptoms including a rapid heart rate, muscle stiffness, high fever, and rapid breathing. Immediate treatment is critical.

## Assessment of Risk for MH:

- Family History: Inquire about unexplained deaths under anesthesia, muscle disorders, or history of MH in family members
- Personal History: Look for unexplained muscle cramps or heat intolerance

## Signs and Symptoms of MH:

- A very high body temperature (hyperthermia)
- Muscle rigidity or stiffness
- A fast heart rate (tachycardia)
- Rapid or difficult breathing (tachypnea)
- High levels of carbon dioxide in the blood
- Dark brown or cola-colored urine, caused by muscle breakdown (rhabdomyolysis)
- Confusion

## Immediate Treatment of MH:

- **Stop the triggering agents:** The anesthesia drugs that caused the reaction are immediately stopped.
- **Administer dantrolene:** This is the specific antidote for MH, which is given intravenously to reverse the reaction.
- **Cool the body:** The patient's body is cooled using measures like iced solutions and cooling blankets.
- **Provide oxygen:** Oxygen is given to help with breathing difficulties.
- **Administer IV fluids:** Intravenous fluids are given to support the body and ensure adequate urine output.

For additional resources, see the MHAUS website using the QR code below:

