PENETRATING CHEST WOUND
A penetrating chest wound could be caused by an accident, stabbing, gunshot wound or an object impaled in the chest. This is an emergency as the injury could cause a lung to collapse (pneumothorax). This happens as air is drawn into the chest cavity through the hole in the chest wall. If allowed to continue, the air pressure on the outside of the lungs, will collapse the lung. Bleeding into the lung may also occur.

SYMPTOMS & SIGNS
Object still in place
Open wound in the chest wall (look for both entry and exit wounds)
Pale, cool, clammy skin
Rapid, weak pulse
Rapid, shallow breathing
Cyanosis (blue colouring of lips and skin) from lack of oxygen
Pain at the site
Increasing shock

MANAGEMENT
Call ‘000’ for an ambulance.
Assist victim into a position of comfort.
If the object is still in place, stabilise it with a pad over the entry wound.