

“It’s Your Call” - Scenario
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“Ah! Now for a nice, after-pizza nap!”

“Think again, Rip Van Winkle! I was just on the phone with Dispatch. They’ll be paging us in a minute.”

“Where to?”

“Mile 14 Boondock Road. An 11-year-old girl with difficulty breathing and tingling around the mouth and lips.”

“Great,” says your partner, “I’m missing my nap AND rattling down the worst road in the area for a kid with hyperventilation syndrome. What do you want to bet she just had a fight with her parents?”

You know your partner’s annoyed assumptions might be right, or totally off base, so as you drive, you review in your mind the pediatric emergencies that can cause dyspnea. There seem to be a lot of them.

On arrival, the scene appears safe, and you are led to where an 11-year-old girl lies in her bed, breathing rapidly and shallowly. Her eyes are open. She seems apprehensive and possibly confused.

Vitals: R=36, shallow. P=116. BP=102/66. SpO₂=88%. Skin is warm, pink, dry. Breath sounds are equal, but distant. Pulses are strong and regular. She follows commands, but says it’s difficult; she’s too tired to move.

On questioning the parents you learn that your patient has no allergies and no regular medications. She has no known medical problems. Her last meal was at lunchtime, 5 hours ago, when the family had seafood chowder, mixed vegetables and a multi-grain bread.

About four hours ago she started complaining of her mouth feeling tingly. Two hours later she vomited and soon began to complain of her hands and feet also feeling tingly. Her parents thought it was likely some GI bug and put her to bed, but kept an eye on her. Now, they say, her behavior is weird, and they don’t like her breathing.

- 1) Are there any findings here that require immediate action on your part?
- 2) Would you prefer to give oxygen by mask or assist ventilations?
- 3) Does this child’s presentation fit the pattern of a “GI bug, or your partner’s assumption of hyperventilation syndrome?
- 4) Are there any syndromes that do match these signs and symptoms? Which?
- 5) Given the answer to question 4, what patient care considerations must you bear in mind?
- 6) Are there other urgent EMS priorities must you consider at this scene? What are these priorities?