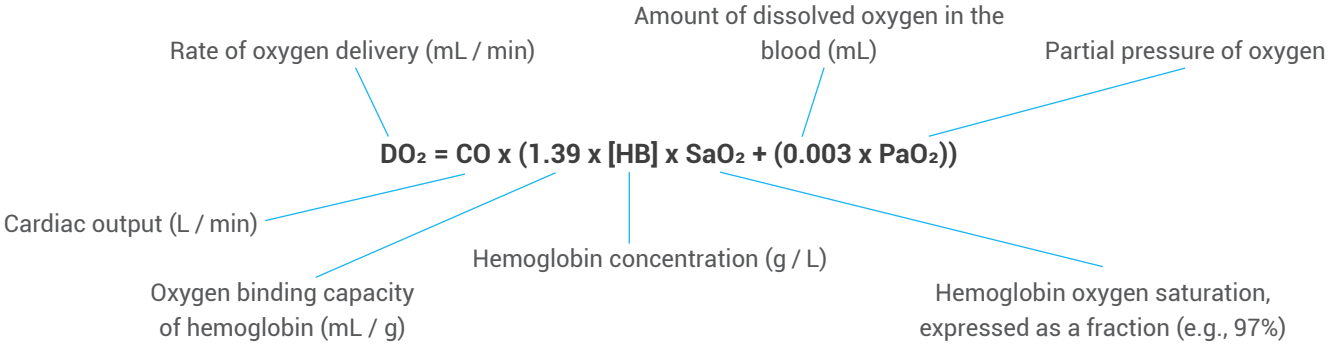
Circulatory shock

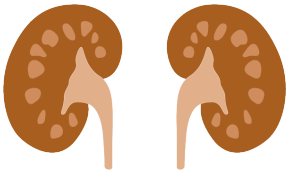
ASSESSING PERFUSION

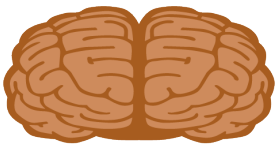
Organ perfusion occurs through delivery of oxygen to tissues via blood flow:



Assessing whether organ perfusion is adequate can be a challenge. Blood pressure, pulse, cardiac output, etc. are only a part of the equation. We do not have easily accessible, timely methods for measuring oxygen delivery to the tissues. Evaluating end-organ function can be useful, as dysfunction suggests there may be inadequate perfusion.

Some signs of inadequate perfusion include


Decreased urine output


Altered mental status


Clammy skin

The presence of a pulse can be reassuring that some degree of flow is present, but it does not guarantee adequate perfusion.

It is possible to have good organ perfusion with a weak or absent pulse, or with a very low blood pressure.

If inadequate perfusion is suspected, interventions to restore perfusion should begin immediately (e.g., chest compressions), and should not be interrupted at specific intervals to confirm the lack of a pulse.