

First Aid Basics

At some time in your life, you may have to provide first aid to another person who has suffered an injury. Here are some simple tips to help you provide first aid for some common injuries and home emergencies.

Shock

Shock can result from a variety of injuries and circumstances. Several symptoms may be present:

- Skin appearing pale or grey and is cool or clammy to the touch
- Weak and rapid heartbeat, slow and shallow breathing, and reduced blood pressure
- Eyes lack shine and seem to stare; pupils may be dilated
- Individual may be conscious or unconscious; if conscious, the person may faint or be very weak or confused
- Occasionally individuals will become overly excited or anxious.

If you suspect an injured person is experiencing or may begin to experience shock, use the following techniques:

- Get him/her to lie down on his/her back and elevate the feet higher than the head. Keep the victim from moving unnecessarily.
- Keep the victim warm and comfortable. Loosen tight clothing and cover him/her with a blanket.

- Do not give the victim anything to drink.
- If he/she is vomiting or bleeding from the mouth, place the victim on his/her side to prevent choking.
- Treat any injuries appropriately.
- Immediately seek emergency medical attention.

Burns

Follow these steps to treat minor burns at home.

- If the skin is not broken, run cool water over the burn for several minutes.
- Cover the burn with a sterile bandage or clean cloth.
- Take an over-the-counter pain reliever such as acetaminophen to relieve any swelling or pain.
- Do not place any creams, ointments, or ice on the burned area.

Immediately seek emergency treatment for more serious burns.

Choking

The Heimlich maneuver is the best-known method for removing an object from the airway of a person who is choking. Follow the steps below to perform the Heimlich maneuver on yourself or someone else:

- Stand behind the choking person and wrap your arms around his/her waist. Bend the person slightly forward.
- Make a fist with one hand and place it slightly above the person's navel.
- Grasp your fist with the other hand and press hard into the

abdomen with a quick, upward thrust.

- Repeat this procedure until the object is expelled from the airway.

If you must perform this maneuver on yourself, position your own fist slightly above your navel. Grasp your fist with your other hand and thrust upward into your abdomen until the object is expelled.

Cuts and Scrapes

Most small cuts and scrapes can be treated at home. However, it is important to take steps to prevent infection or other complications from occurring. When treating minor wounds, remember the following:

- Stop bleeding by applying pressure with a sterile gauze pad or clean cloth. If bleeding persists after several minutes of applying pressure, seek immediate medical attention.
- Keep the wound clean by washing the area with mild soap and water and removing any dirt. Dry the area gently with a clean cloth, and cover the wound with a protective bandage. Change the bandage at least once a day. If the wound becomes red or tender to the touch, or oozes fluid, see your doctor.



- If a cut is more serious (large, deep, or rough on the edges) and bleeding does not stop by applying pressure, seek immediate medical attention.

Nosebleeds

A nosebleed is spontaneous bleeding from one or both nostrils that may result from trauma to the nose, dry air, allergies, or no apparent cause. To stop the flow of blood from a common nosebleed, try the following:

- Have the victim sit or stand upright to slow the flow of blood in the veins of the nose. Do NOT tip his/her head back.
- Gently pinch the nose with your thumb and forefinger for ten minutes, maintaining pressure. Have the victim breathe through his/her mouth during this time.
- If bleeding persists, call the doctor or 9-1-1.

Poisoning

The signs of poisoning may or may not be obvious. Sometimes the source of a poisoning can be easily identified – an open bottle of medication or a spilled bottle of household cleaner. Other times the cause may not be as apparent. Look for the following signs and symptoms if you suspect a poisoning:

- Burns or redness around the mouth and lips
- Breath that smells like chemicals
- Burns, stains, or odors on the person, his/her clothing, or in the surrounding area
- Vomiting or difficulty breathing

If you believe someone has been poisoned, do the following:

- 1) Many poisonous products include instructions on the label specifying what to do if poisoning occurs. If you know the source of the poisoning and the product has

instructions, follow them.

- 2) If you cannot identify the poison or there are no instructions on the product label, call your local poison control center for instructions. Always keep the number near your home phone, or programmed into your cell phone.
- 3) If the victim is alert, give him/her a glass of water or milk to drink. The liquid will slow the rate at which the poison is absorbed into the body. If the person is weak, lethargic, unconscious, or having seizures, do not give him/her anything by mouth.
- 4) Certain poisons should be vomited while others should not. If you do not know the source of the poisoning, do not induce vomiting. Generally, you should not induce vomiting unless directed to by a poison control authority or a physician.
- 5) If you must induce vomiting, use syrup of Ipecac. Vomiting can also be induced by touching the back of the throat of the victim to initiate gagging.
- 6) Seek immediate medical attention. If you have identified the poison, take the container with you.

Poison Control:

(800) 222-1222

For household pet poisonings, call the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center Hotline:**
(888) 426-4435

Mouth-to-Mouth Resuscitation

Unfortunately, there may come a time when you have to aid a victim in breathing. Follow these

steps if you end up in a life-or-death situation:

- 1) To begin mouth-to-mouth, check for breathing by positioning the victim on his/her back on a firm, flat surface. Place yourself next to the person's neck and shoulders. Extend the person's neck gently, and open the mouth and airway by lifting the chin.
- 2) To determine whether or not breathing is taking place, place your ear above the mouth and listen for the sounds of inhaling and exhaling. Feel for air against your cheek and watch for motion in his/her chest.
- 3) If the victim is not breathing, begin mouth-to-mouth immediately.
- 4) Pinch his/her nostrils closed with your thumb and forefinger. Take a deep breath and make a seal around the victim's mouth with your mouth. Breathe slowly into his/her mouth twice, checking to be sure the chest rises with each breath. After the second breath, turn your head, listen for air leaving the victim's lungs, and watch to see if the chest falls.
- 5) Check to see if the person has a pulse. Place two fingers on the victim's carotid artery – just to the side of the Adam's apple – to feel for movement. If the artery is pulsating, continue mouth-to-mouth resuscitation in the same manner, blowing a deep breath into the victim every 5 seconds, or 12 breaths every minute. If the artery is not pulsing, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- 6) Continue to breathe for the person until he/she breathes on his/her own or medical help arrives. To learn more comprehensive first aid skills, organizations such as the Red Cross provide specialized first aid training - www.redcross.org.

Did you know...?

Having a first aid kit is the best way to be prepared for home injuries and emergencies. Many retailers sell pre-packaged kits, but to build your own, include: Assorted bandages, alcohol wipes, gauze, gauze tape, antiseptic ointment, instant ice packs, sterile eye wash, elastic bandages, bandage scissors, tweezers, and pain relief medication.