

Basic First Aid Tips

Accidents may happen anywhere and at any time. The first response to an accident is often the most important. Particularly when someone is injured or suddenly becomes ill as the result of an accident, there is often a critical period before you can get medical treatment, and it is this period of time that is of the utmost importance. You owe it to yourself, and your family to know and to understand procedures you can apply quickly in an emergency. Often, first aid given at the scene can improve the chances of survival and result in a positive recovery. To help you prepare we offer a few of the most common safety tips.

Make sure you have a first aid kit. Supplies need to be clearly marked and readily available in an emergency. Also, make sure your kit is unlocked to provide easy access to everyone. Have someone call 911 while you apply first aid. The person who calls for help should explain the nature of the emergency and ask what should be done pending the arrival of the ambulance. Reassure the victim, and try to remain calm. Your demeanor can relieve the fear and panic of the patient. Whenever possible, wear latex / non-latex gloves to protect yourself from blood and other bodily fluids.

Burns - Stop the Burning Process:

- Stop, drop and roll to smother the flames
- Cool the burn with cool (not cold) water. Do not use ice.
- Carefully remove clothing, jewelry or belts that are not firmly adhered to the victim

Cover the Burn:

- Small burns should be washed with soap and water and covered with a clean, dry dressing
- Large burns- immerse the burn area with cool water, cover with a sheet or towel. No ice.
- Do not use ointments this will make it harder to evaluate and treat the burn
- Do not break blisters; blisters serve as a protection for the wound
- Chemical burns- remove any clothing and flush skin with plenty of water

Bleeding - Cuts or Lacerations:

- To control severe bleeding, apply direct pressure to the wound by hand as quickly as possible. If the wound is large and wide open, bring the edges of the wound together first.
- While keeping pressure on the wound, elevate the injured area – this will reduce blood flow to the wound. Stay calm and reassure the victim; this will help reduce their heart rate.
- Quickly cover the wound with dressings, preferably sterile, and continue direct pressure over the dressings.
- Nose Bleeds- Have victim sit up and lean forward. Loosen tight clothing around neck. Pinch lower end of nose close to nostrils (not on bony part of nose) for 10–15 minutes. A cold, wet washcloth held over the nose with pressure may also help.

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Insect Bites & Stings:

- Most bites and stings cause little more than temporary discomfort. Some people, however, are particularly sensitive to them and could go into shock if there is a severe allergic reaction. In these instances professional medical help should be immediately sought.

If the victim is unconscious, perform rescue breathing. If the victim's heart has stopped beating, perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if you have been properly trained to do so. The American Red Cross has changed the guidelines for CPR. ABC (Airway, Breathing, Chest Compressions) has changed to CAB (Compressions, Airway, Breathing) for all ages. Compressions will now be initiated prior to ventilations.

The practice of first aid is often said to be one of "common sense" and in many ways this is true. For example, if someone is bleeding then the first action is to stop it. Keep victims who are in shock covered to reduce heat loss. And, don't move a victim who may have a spinal injury. The first response to an accident is the most important- know what to do. This information is designed as a guide only. It does not take the place of immediate emergency medical attention. If you have any doubts, immediately call your doctor or 911 for emergency medical services.

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