

First Aid

Read the article below and answer these questions:

1. When do people do first aid?
 2. What are the ABCs of first aid? When do you use it?
 3. What is CPR and when do you use it?
 4. How do you treat someone who is bleeding a lot?
 5. How do you treat someone who is choking on food?
 6. What are the 3 levels of burns, and how do you treat them?
 7. How do you treat nosebleeds?
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Clip source: [First Aid Basics: Life-Saving Procedures](#)

Basic First Aid Procedures

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Basic [first aid](#) procedures can help you get someone through a medical crisis, at least until the paramedics arrive or you can get them to a hospital. The best way to prepare for these events is to get official first aid training, such as that offered by the American Red Cross.

Until you're able to do that, though, you can learn some basic first aid procedures. That way, you can respond the right way when someone needs you to.



First aid is the care a sick or injured person gets before they get full medical treatment. In some cases, it may be the only care someone needs, while in others, it may keep them safe until paramedics arrive or someone else gets them to the hospital.

First aid can include everything from bandaging a minor wound to preventing shock to keeping someone's heart beating during a **cardiac event**. Ideally, it should be performed by someone who's [taken a class](#) and is certified in first aid, but if no one is available, anyone with some basic knowledge can pitch in.

When someone is unconscious or unresponsive, a basic tenet of first aid is **ABC**:

- **Airway:** If someone's not breathing, clear their airway.
- **Breathing:** If the airway is clear and they're still not breathing, provide rescue breathing.
- **Circulation:** Chest compressions to keep blood circulating should be performed along with rescue breathing. If the person is breathing but unresponsive, check their pulse to see if their heart has stopped and, if so, provide chest compressions.

An alternate and [simpler version of the ABCs](#) is:

- **Awake?** If not, try to wake them. If they don't wake up, make sure someone is calling 911 and move on to B.
- **Breathing?** If not, start rescue breathing and chest compressions. If so, move on to C.
- **Continue care:** Follow instructions from 911 or continue treatment until an ambulance arrives.

CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)



Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is the most important medical procedure of all. If a person is in [cardiac arrest](#) (the heart is no longer pumping blood) and CPR is not performed, that person will die. On the other hand, performing CPR or using an AED could save a life.

AEDs are available in many public areas and businesses. These devices are simplified for use even if you have never been trained. CPR training will include getting familiar with AED use, which can save valuable time if you need to use one.

First Aid for Suspected Cardiac Arrest

When you suspect someone is in cardiac arrest:

1. Get someone to call 911 or the medical alert system for your location.
2. Start chest compressions immediately. Push down hard and fast in the center of the chest, allowing the chest to come back up naturally between compressions. Continue until someone with more training has arrived.
3. If you're trained in CPR, use chest compressions and rescue breathing.
4. Use an AED if one is available. It's important to not delay chest compressions, though, so have someone else find one while you do chest compressions.

Taking a formal [CPR class](#) will help you become familiar with chest compressions, rescue breathing, and AED use, and that can make all the difference if you're around when someone has a heart attack. To take a class, contact your local chapter of the [American Red Cross](#) or look online for classes in your community. You can also take an online-only class if none are available in your area.

Bleeding



Bleeding is usually fairly obvious, especially if it's severe. While it is important to stop the bleeding, remember the ABCs and check first for something more serious.

Regardless of severity, almost all bleeding can be controlled, so don't think you can't help someone who's bleeding a lot. If severe bleeding is allowed to continue, it can lead to [shock](#) and, eventually, death.

It's easy to overestimate the amount of blood loss you're witnessing. To get an accurate assessment of what type of bleeding it is, look at its color and how it's leaving the body.

- **Capillaries:** Bleeding from [capillaries](#), which are the smallest blood vessels, looks like a trickle and will usually stop on its own.
- **Veins:** A consistent blood flow and blood that's a dark red color is most likely coming from the veins. It can result in anywhere from mild to severe bleeding that can be rapid.
- **Arteries:** [Arteries](#) are the largest blood vessels and are under pressure, so blood spurts from the wound. It's also bright red, as it carries more oxygen. Blood can be lost most rapidly from an arterial bleed and it's always considered an emergency.

Call 911 or get the person to a hospital any time you suspect arterial bleeding, blood is soaking through bandages, or the bleeding won't stop. Make sure someone can keep treating the person during the drive or while you wait for an ambulance.

Whenever possible, wash your hands when treating a wound to help prevent infection. Wear latex or nitrile gloves if they're available. This can protect you from infections in the injured person's blood, including [viral hepatitis](#) or [HIV/AIDS](#).⁶

First Aid for Bleeding

If you're faced with bleeding:

1. Rinse the wound with water if possible.
2. Cover the wound with a gauze or cloth (towel, blanket, clothing, whatever's available).
3. Apply direct pressure to stop the blood flow and encourage clotting.
4. If possible, elevate the bleeding body part above the heart.
5. Don't remove the cloth if it becomes soaked through, but add more layers if needed. Removing the first layer will interfere with the clotting process and result in more blood loss.
6. Once bleeding is stopped, apply a clean bandage.

Get medical help when the wound:

- Is deep
- Has widely separated sides
- Oozes blood after pressure has been applied
- Is from a bite (human or animal)
- Is a puncture, burn, or electrical injury

Choking



Choking due to a windpipe obstruction is a serious situation that can make someone lose consciousness and even die if the obstruction isn't removed. Procedures are different for babies who are less than a year old.

Before you start first aid on someone for choking, make sure they really need it. If they're coughing or talking, leave them alone. That's not really choking. Signs of choking include:

- Gagging, gasping, or wheezing
- Inability to talk or make noise
- Turning blue in the face
- Grabbing at the throat
- Waving arms
- Appearing panicked

If the person is conscious and old enough to respond properly, ask if they're choking before you start first aid. In anyone but an infant, that means performing the Heimlich maneuver.

First Aid for Choking

To perform the **Heimlich maneuver**:

1. Stand behind the person and lean them slightly forward
2. Put your arms around their waist
3. Clench a fist and place it between their navel and rib cage
4. Grab your fist with your other hand
5. Pull the clenched fist sharply backward and upward under their rib cage in 5 quick thrusts. Repeat until the object is coughed up.

For someone who's obese or pregnant, perform thrusts around the chest instead of the abdomen.

If someone is unconscious:

1. Place them on their back and kneel over them
2. Place the heel of your hand slightly above the navel
3. Place your other hand on top of it
4. Give quick upward thrusts to dislodge the obstruction

Burns



The first step to [treating a burn](#) is to stop the burning process. Chemicals need to be cleaned off. Electricity needs to be turned off. Heat needs to be cooled down with running water. Sunburn victims need to be covered up or go inside.

No matter what caused the burns or how bad they are, stopping the burn comes before treating the burn. The [severity of a burn](#) is based on its depth and size:

- **First-degree burn:** This affects only the outer layer of skin and causes redness and swelling. It is always considered a minor burn.
- **Second-degree burn:** This affects two layers of skin and causes blistering along with redness and swelling. It is considered a major burn if it's more than 3 inches wide *or* on the face, hands, feet, genitals, buttocks, or over a major joint.
- **Third-degree burns:** This affects deeper layers of skin and causes white or blackened skin that may be numb. It is always considered a major burn.

Major burns need emergency medical attention, so call 911 or get someone else to call once the burning process has been stopped.

First Aid for Burns

Take these first aid steps:

1. Flush the burned area with cool running water for several minutes. Do not use ice.
2. Apply a light gauze bandage.
3. Take **ibuprofen** or **acetaminophen** [both are pain killer pills] for pain relief if necessary.
4. Do not break any blisters that may have formed.

Do not apply ointments, butter, or oily remedies to a burn.

Nosebleeds



Most of us have had a bloody nose at some time in our lives. It simply means bleeding from the inside of the nose due to trauma. The biggest cause of a nosebleed is digital trauma—otherwise known as picking it. It can also be caused by environmental factors, medical conditions (some minor, some serious), medications, and recreational drugs. Causes include:

- Dry or hot air
- High altitudes
- Chemical fumes that irritate the nasal passage
- [Colds](#) and [allergies](#)
- Blowing your nose hard or often
- Trauma to the nose

Many of these things dry out or damage the delicate nasal membranes in your nostrils, causing them to become crusty and burst when irritated.

First Aid for Nosebleed

The first aid for nosebleed includes:

1. Lean slightly forward, not back.
2. Pinch the nose just below the bridge, high enough that the nostrils aren't pinched closed.
3. Check after five minutes to see if bleeding has stopped. If not, continue pinching and check after another 10 minutes.
4. You can also apply a cold pack to the bridge of the nose while pinching.

A nosebleed needs emergency medical treatment when:

- It won't stop even after more than 15 minutes of direct pressure
- You're losing a lot of blood
- You have a hard time breathing
- You've swallowed a lot of blood and vomited it up
- You've had a serious injury or a blow to the head