

Overview of Basic First Aid

The following information is intended to be a brief overview of basic first aid and safety. Families may request that you complete a certified Standard First Aid and CPR course.

Your role in an emergency situation can save a life. Calling 911 is the most important thing that you can do. The sooner medical help arrives, the better a person's chance of survival. Your job is to:

Recognize the emergency exists.

Emergencies can happen anywhere, at any time, to anyone. Before you can provide help you must recognize the situation is an emergency. You may realize an emergency has occurred only if something unusual attracts your attention. Examples include:

- Unusual noises: screams, yells, moans, calls for help, breaking glass, crashing, screeching tires, or sudden loud voices.
- Unusual sights: overturned pot, spilled medicine, downed electrical wires, fire, or smoke
- Unusual odors: an odor stronger than normal or unrecognizable.
- Unusual appearance: difficulty breathing, clutching chest or throat, slurred or confused speech, confusion, sweating for no apparent reason, unusual skin color

Decide to act.

If you see that there is an emergency, get involved. Remember this rule: **Check, Call, Care.**

- **Check** the scene. Is it safe for you to approach? **Check** the victim. Is this a life-threatening situation?
- **Call** 911 or your emergency help number.
- Provide **Care** until help arrives.

Injuries or illness may require basic first aid.

Burns

Fire, sun, chemicals, heated objects, fluids, and electricity can cause burns. They can be minor problems or life threatening emergencies. If you are not sure how serious the burn is, seek emergency help.

- **First-degree burns** are those in which only the outer layer of skin is burned. The skin is usually red and some swelling and pain may occur, unless the burn involves large portions of the body, it can be treated at home.
- **Second-degree burns** are those in which the first layer of skin has been burned through and the second layer of skin is also burned. In these burns, the skin reddens intensely and blisters develop. Severe pain and swelling also occur. If the burn covers a larger area, seek medical attention.

- **Third-degree burns** are the most serious and involve all layers of skin. Fat, nerves, muscles, and even bone may be affected. Areas may be charred black or appear a dry white. If nerve damage is substantial, there may be no pain at all. These burns should receive immediate medical attention.

Minor burns can be treated at home. If the skin is not broken, immerse the skin in cool water for at least 10 minutes. Then cover the burn with a sterile bandage or clean cloth.

Major burns need immediate emergency treatment. Until an emergency unit arrives, follow these steps:

- Remove the person from the source of the burn (fire, electrical current, etc.)
- Remove all smoldering clothing to stop further burning.
- If the person is breathing sufficiently, cover the burned area with a cool, moist sterile bandage or clean cloth. Do not place any creams, ointments, or ice on the burned area or break blisters.

Choking

The Heimlich maneuver is the best known method of removing an object from the airway of a person who is choking. If you are familiar with the Heimlich maneuver or you have been trained to perform it safely, you may use it on yourself or someone else.

- Stand behind the choking person and wrap your arms around his or her waist. Bend the person slightly forward.
- Make a fist with one hand and place it slightly above the person's naval.
- Grasp your fist with the other hand and press it 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 fist slightly above your naval. Grasp your fist with your hand and thrust upward until the object is expelled.

Cuts and Scrapes

Small cuts and scrapes usually don't require a visit to the emergency room, but proper care is needed to avoid infections. When dealing with minor wounds, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Stop the bleeding by applying pressure by wearing medical gloves and using a gauze pad or clean cloth. If the bleeding doesn't stop, get 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 bandages at least once a day. If the wound becomes tender to the touch, red, or oozes fluid, see your doctor.

Remember universal precautions whenever you are dealing with body fluids.

Eye Injuries

Foreign bodies such as dirt, sand, wood or metal chips may cause tearing. Tearing may rid the eye of the foreign body. If the object remains in the eye, have the victim blink several times. If the object still remains in the eye, gently flush the eye with water.