

*First Aid for Emergency
and Nonemergency
Situations*

Chapter 2

Lesson 1

The Need for First Aid/ Your Response



Key Words

- cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- catastrophe
- consent
- emergency medical service (EMS)
- evaluate
- first aid
- Good Samaritan Law

What You Will Learn to Do

- Assess first aid situations

Linked Core Abilities

- Do your share as a good citizen in your school, community, country, and the world

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Assess the need for knowing how to perform first aid
- Explain the significance of the Good Samaritan Law
- Identify the steps of first aid intervention
- Identify the information needed when calling an emergency number such as 911
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

Most people encounter at least one situation requiring the use of first aid at some time in their lives. Whether a friend falls when rollerblading and breaks an arm or your younger brother cuts himself on broken glass and requires stitches, someone should administer first aid until the injured person receives proper medical attention. That someone can be you if you acquire basic first aid knowledge of what to do and what not to do in different accident situations. Remember that first aid may mean the difference between life and death, permanent and temporary disability, or long- and short-term recovery for an accident victim.

In addition to the first aid taught in this chapter, consider taking a first aid class from a qualified instructor. Many schools, hospitals, and fire departments offer first aid classes that provide demonstrations and hands-on experience with medical models of victims. Hands-on training is especially important before actually performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and **cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)**, both of which can be hazardous to a victim if performed improperly.

Definition of First Aid

First aid is the immediate care given to an injured or ill individual to keep him or her alive or stop further damage until qualified medical treatment can be administered. It is caring for people involved in accidents, **catastrophes**, and natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes. First aid includes dealing with the situation, the person, and the injury, as well as encouraging the victim and showing a willingness to help.

Good Samaritan Law

The **Good Samaritan Law** is designed to protect the rescuer and encourage people to assist others in distress by granting them immunity against lawsuits. This law protects people from lawsuits as long as the rescuer is acting in good faith, without compensation and administers first aid correctly and without malicious misconduct or gross negligence (see Figure 2.1.1).



Key Note Terms

cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) – an emergency method to keep blood and oxygen flowing through a person whose heart and breathing have stopped

first aid – the immediate care given to a victim of injury or sudden illness before professional medical help arrives

catastrophe – a great and sudden misfortune

Good Samaritan Law – a law enacted in most states that protects people from lawsuits if medical complications arise after they have administered first aid correctly

Figure 2.1.1: EMTs are protected from litigation under the Good Samaritan Law.

Courtesy of Dorothy Littell/
Stock Boston.

First Aid Kit

Administering first aid is easier with a first aid kit. It is a good idea to keep one in your house and car and take one along on camping trips and hikes. A well-stocked first aid kit contains an assortment of bandages, Band-Aids, tape, aspirin or aspirin substitutes, antiseptic cream and cleanser, safety pins, scissors, tweezers, cotton, and tissues. To protect against infectious diseases, include rubber gloves and face shields in the kit. Rubber gloves will keep you from contacting blood and body fluids, and face shields will allow you to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and CPR without direct contact.

Evaluating the Victim

When you encounter an injured person, you must **evaluate** that person to determine what kind of first aid, if any, is needed. This preliminary check of the person follows a series of steps designed to pinpoint and correct the most serious health risks first and then continue with less life-threatening problems. These steps are explained in more detail later in this lesson. Basically, check for breathing and heartbeat first; severe bleeding second; signs of shock third; and finally for broken bones, burns, and head injuries. Depending on what problems your evaluation of an accident victim reveals, perform the life-saving steps in a sequence that parallels this evaluation sequence:

1. **Open the airway**
2. **Assess breathing**
3. **Assess circulation**
4. **Assess disability**

When evaluating a conscious victim, ask the victim if you can help and get **consent** to provide first aid; then get as much information as possible about the situation and how the victim feels. If the victim is unconscious and others witnessed the accident, get as much information from the witnesses as possible. Check the victim for medical alert identification. Many people with heart disease, epilepsy, diabetes, and allergies to medications wear medical alert identification bracelets or necklaces that can give you a clue as to their medical condition.

Have someone at the scene dial 911 for **emergency medical services (EMS)**. If you are alone and the victim's condition is life-threatening, give first aid first, and then call 911. When calling 911, calmly state your name and exact location, the telephone number from which you are calling, details of what has happened, and the condition of the victim or victims. A dispatcher, as depicted in Figure 2.1.2, will route your call to the appropriate service—either the EMS, police department, fire department, or a combination of these services.

Other important rules to follow at the scene of an accident include the following:

Key Note Term

evaluate – to determine if an act, process, or method has been attained; to assess; to determine the significance by careful appraisal and study

Key Note Terms

consent – to get approval for what is to be done or proposed by another

emergency medical service (EMS) – medical professional dedicated to the reduction of morbidity and mortality of residents through the provision of Advanced and Basic Life Support care, medically directed rescue, and transportation of the ill and injured

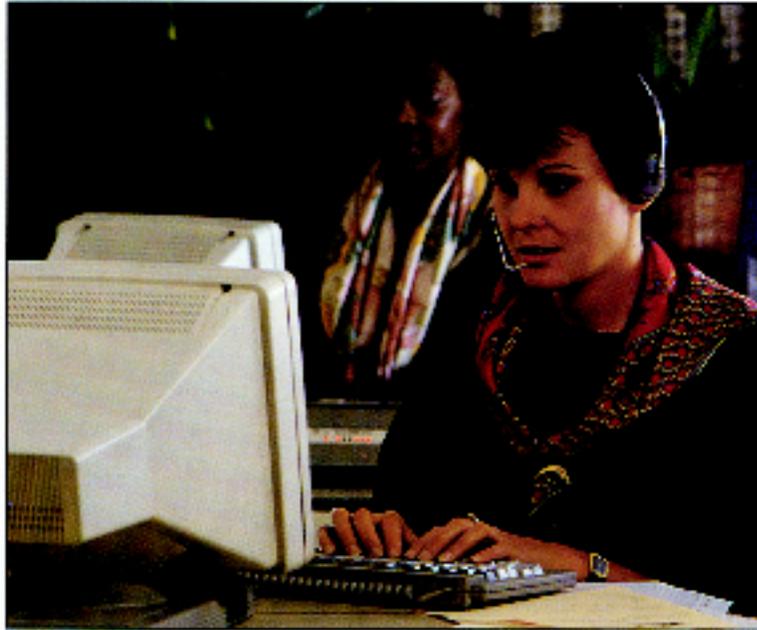


Figure 2.1.2: Dispatchers answer 911 calls and route them to the proper response service.

Courtesy of Frank Siteman/
Rainbow.

- **Remain calm but act quickly.** This will reassure the victim and help him or her to remain calm as well.
- **Do not move an injured person.** If the person has a neck or spine injury or broken bones, moving him or her could worsen the condition. Only move a victim if there is potential danger in remaining at the accident location. If you must move the victim for this reason, pull him or her in a straight line from the shoulders, keeping the head and body in line. Support the head and pull the victim as short a distance as possible.
- **If there is more than one injured person at an accident scene, evaluate them quickly; then help the most seriously injured first.** For example, help the person with severe bleeding before you help the person with a broken arm.

The Life-Saving Steps

The following steps identify evaluation procedures and specify treatment if necessary.

1. **Check to see if the victim is conscious.**
 - a. **Ask in a loud but calm voice, “Are you okay?”**
 - b. **Gently shake or tap the victim on the shoulder.**
 - c. **Watch for response. If the victim does not respond, go to Step 2.**
 - d. **If the victim is conscious, ask where he or she feels different than usual or where it hurts. Go to Step 3.**
 - e. **If the victim is conscious but is choking and cannot talk, stop the evaluation and begin treatment for clearing the airway of a conscious victim.**
2. **Check for breathing and heartbeat.**
 - a. **Look for rise and fall of the victim’s chest.**
 - b. **Listen for breathing by placing your ear about one inch from the victim’s mouth and nose.**

- c. Feel for breathing by placing your hand or cheek about one inch from the victim's mouth and nose.
 - d. At the same time, check for a pulse in the victim's neck.
 - e. If there is a pulse but no breathing, stop the evaluation and begin treatment to restore the breathing.
 - f. If there is no pulse, stop the evaluation and begin CPR.
3. Check for bleeding.
- a. Look for spurts of blood and blood-soaked clothing.
 - b. Look for entry and exit wounds.
 - c. If bleeding is present, stop the evaluation and begin treatment for stopping the bleeding.
4. Check for the following signs of shock:
- a. Sweaty, but cool skin
 - b. Paleness
 - c. Restlessness or nervousness
 - d. Thirst
 - e. Loss of blood
 - f. Confusion
 - g. Faster than normal breathing rate
 - h. Blotchy or bluish skin
 - i. Vomiting or nausea

If any of these signs are present, discontinue the evaluation and treat for shock.

5. Check for fractures (broken bones).
- a. Check for the following signs of neck or back injury:
 - Pain or tenderness of neck or back area
 - Wounds of neck or back area
 - Paralysis
 - b. Ask the victim if he or she can move.
 - c. Touch the victim's arms and legs and ask whether he or she can feel it.
 - d. If you suspect a neck or back injury, immobilize the victim by doing the following:
 - Tell the victim not to move.
 - If you suspect a back injury, place padding under the natural arch of the lower back.
 - If you suspect a neck injury, place padding under the victim's neck and place objects such as rocks or shoes on both sides of the head.
 - e. Check the victim's arms or legs for fractures or broken bones. Signs are as follows:
 - Swelling
 - Discoloration
 - Unusual angle or position of arm or leg
 - Bones sticking through the skin

If you suspect a fracture, stop the evaluation and begin treatment for fractures.

6. Check for burns. If you find burns, cover them with a clean dry cloth.

7. Check for head injury. Some possible signs of head injury are as follows:

- a. Pupils of eyes unequal size**
- b. Fluid from ear(s), nose, mouth or wounds to the head or face**
- c. Slurred speech**
- d. Confusion**
- e. Sleepiness**
- f. Loss of memory or consciousness**
- g. Staggering when walking**
- h. Headache**
- i. Dizziness**
- j. Vomiting**
- k. Paralysis**
- l. Convulsion or twitching**

When first aid is administered correctly and in a timely manner, it could mean the difference between life and death for the victim. Figure 2.1.3 shows emergency medical personnel assisting with an injured person.

If a head injury is suspected, keep the person awake. Watch the victim for signs that would require restoring breathing or treating for shock.



Figure 2.1.3: Emergency personnel are trained to help victims of all types of injuries.

Courtesy of Spencer Grant/
Photo Researchers.

When to Call 911 or Your Local Emergency Number

Call for an ambulance if the victim

- Is or becomes unconscious
- Has trouble breathing
- Has persistent chest pain or pressure
- Is bleeding severely
- Has persistent pain or pressure in the abdomen
- Is vomiting
- Has seizures, slurred speech, or persistent severe headache
- Appears to have been poisoned
- Has injuries to the head, neck, or back
- Has possible broken bones

Also call if there is

- A fire or explosion
- A downed electrical wire
- Swiftly moving or rapidly rising water
- Poisonous gas present
- A vehicle collision

Call the Emergency Number

Call or send someone to call for an ambulance. Calling your emergency number is often the most important thing you can do in an emergency. It is often critical to get professional medical help on the scene as soon as possible. In many communities, you can dial 911 for help in any type of emergency; otherwise, dial your local police or sheriff for medical emergencies, or dial 0, the operator, for assistance. Be prepared to follow these steps:

- 1. Speak slowly and clearly.**
- 2. Identify yourself and the phone number from which you are calling.**
- 3. Give the exact location of the accident. Give the town, street name, and number. If you are calling at night, describe the building.**
- 4. Describe what has happened. Give essential details about the victim(s), the situation, and any treatments you have given.**
- 5. Ask for advice. Let the person on the other end ask you questions and tell you what to do until help arrives. Take notes, if necessary.**
- 6. Hang up last. The person on the other end may have more questions or advice for you. And they might want you to stay on the phone with them until help arrives. Whatever the case, let the other person hang up first.**

Conclusion

First aid is the help that you give an injured person until qualified medical personnel can administer treatment. In other words, think of first aid as aid given first before actual medical treatment. The type of first aid required by an individual depends upon his or her injuries, and you determine what those injuries are by carefully and quickly evaluating the person. This evaluation and the administration of first aid follows a sequence that deals with the most life-threatening problems first—breathing and heartbeat, followed by bleeding; then other health problems—shock, broken bones, burns, and head injuries.

In the following lesson, you will learn life-saving techniques that you can use in a dire emergency.

Lesson Review

- 1. Do you know how to perform CPR? If so, where did you learn this skill? If not, where can you learn it?**
- 2. What is the Good Samaritan Law?**
- 3. Why is it important to have rubber gloves and a face shield in your first aid kit?**
- 4. What skill can you use to remain calm and aware in a medical emergency?**