

First Aid Essentials

What to do in the first minutes. Get trained help as soon as you can.

Before you help

1. Make sure the area is safe for you.
2. Call or send for help. Note the time.
3. Ask loudly: "Are you OK?" Gently tap the shoulders.
4. Check breathing: look, listen and feel for up to 10 seconds.

Not breathing normally: CPR

1. Place the person on their back on a firm surface.
2. Put the heel of your hand in the centre of the chest, other hand on top.
3. Push hard and fast: 5–6 cm deep, 100–120 times per minute. Let the chest rise fully between pushes.
4. If trained: after 30 pushes give 2 rescue breaths. If not trained: keep pushing without stopping.
5. Continue until the person breathes normally, trained help takes over, or you are too exhausted to continue.

TIP Child: one or two hands, about 5 cm deep. Baby under 1 year: two fingers in the centre of the chest, about 4 cm deep. Give rescue breaths if you can.

Breathing but not responding: recovery position

1. Kneel beside them. Place the arm nearest you at a right angle.
2. Bring the far arm across the chest, back of the hand against the near cheek.
3. Bend the far knee and roll the person towards you onto their side.
4. Tilt the head back slightly so the airway stays open. Check breathing until help arrives.

WARNING If you suspect a neck or back injury (fall, crash, blast), do not move the person unless they are in danger or not breathing.

Heavy bleeding

1. Press hard directly on the wound with a cloth, gauze or your hands. Do not let go.
2. For a deep wound, pack it tightly with cloth and keep pressing.
3. If bleeding from an arm or leg does not stop with pressure: apply a tourniquet 5–7 cm above the wound (not on a joint). Tighten until bleeding stops.
4. Write the time the tourniquet was applied on the person's skin or the tourniquet. Do not loosen it. Get to medical care urgently.

TIP A commercial tourniquet works best. Improvised: a wide band (5 cm) of cloth plus a stick to twist it tight. Never use a thin cord or wire.

Choking

- Adult or child: if they cannot speak, cough or breathe, give up to 5 firm back blows between the shoulder blades, then up to 5 abdominal thrusts (fist above the navel, pull in and up). Repeat.

- Baby under 1 year: face down along your forearm, up to 5 back blows, then turn over and give up to 5 chest thrusts with two fingers. Never abdominal thrusts.
- If they become unresponsive: start CPR.

Burns

1. Cool the burn under cool running water for 20 minutes (any time up to 3 hours after).
2. Remove rings, watches and clothing near the burn unless stuck to the skin.
3. Cover loosely with cling film or a clean, non-fluffy cloth.
4. Get medical help for large, deep, facial, hand, genital or electrical burns, and for children.

DANGER Never put ice, butter, oil, toothpaste or creams on a burn. Keep the person warm.

Broken bones and sprains

Keep the injured part still in the position found. Support it with padding or a splint (stick, rolled newspaper) tied above and below the injury. Check that fingers or toes stay warm and pink.

Shock

Signs: pale, cold, sweaty skin, fast weak pulse, confusion. Lay them down, raise the legs if no leg, hip or spine injury, keep them warm, give nothing to eat or drink, reassure them, get help.

Heat and cold

- Heat exhaustion (heavy sweating, weakness, nausea): move to shade, loosen clothes, sip water, cool with wet cloths.
- Heat stroke (hot skin, confusion, collapse) is life-threatening: cool fast with cold water, wet cloths and fanning, and cold packs on the neck, armpits and groin. Get help.
- Hypothermia (shivering, slurred speech, confusion): move to shelter, remove wet clothes, wrap in blankets, warm the body core, give warm sweet drinks only if fully alert. No alcohol.
- Frostbite: do not rub. Rewarm in warm (not hot) water only if it will not freeze again.

Diarrhoea: oral rehydration solution (ORS)

Use ORS packets if available. Otherwise mix: 1 litre of safe water + 6 level teaspoons of sugar + ½ level teaspoon of salt. Stir until dissolved.

- Give small sips often. Keep breastfeeding babies. Keep feeding.
- Children: give zinc tablets for 10–14 days if available from a health worker.
- Get help urgently for blood in stool, high fever, repeated vomiting, sunken eyes, very sleepy child, or a child who cannot drink.

Wounds and infection

Wash small wounds with clean water, cover with a clean dressing and change it daily. Signs of infection: spreading redness, swelling, pus, heat, fever. Get medical help. Dirty or deep wounds may need a tetanus vaccine.

Severe allergic reaction

Swelling of face or throat, difficulty breathing, collapse: use the person's adrenaline auto-injector (outer thigh) if they have one and get emergency help. A second dose may be given after 5 minutes if there is no improvement.

First aid kit

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| ☐ Disposable gloves | ☐ Antiseptic wipes |
| ☐ Sterile gauze and dressings | ☐ Thermal / emergency blanket |
| ☐ Bandages (roller and triangular) | ☐ ORS packets |
| ☐ Adhesive tape | ☐ Pain and fever medicine |
| ☐ Tourniquet | ☐ Personal medicines (2 weeks) |
| ☐ Scissors and tweezers | ☐ This guide |



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Sources:

- IFRC: International First Aid, Resuscitation and Education Guidelines 2020
- American Heart Association / European Resuscitation Council: CPR guidelines
- WHO / UNICEF: Oral rehydration salts and management of diarrhoea
- CDC: Heat-related illness; Winter weather safety

Important: General information only. Not a substitute for trained medical help or official instructions. Always follow local authorities and emergency services.

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