

Resources to Complete Basic First-Aid Certification

IF YOU WITNESSED AN ACCIDENT, would you know what to do to help the victims involved? It may be necessary to call 911 for help, but you can prepare for emergencies as well. By obtaining basic first-aid certification, you will learn how to assess and help victims in many situations. In this unit, you will learn how to prepare for emergencies and how to handle them when they occur.



Objective:



Describe the supplies and techniques used in basic first aid.

Key Terms:



chain of survival
first aid
first-aid kits
first responder

Good Samaritan Law
medical emergencies
medical identification
tags

responsive
unresponsive

Understanding Basic First Aid

First aid is the earliest care victims receive for the treatment of injuries, illness, and ailments. The goals of first aid are to prevent further harm, to preserve life, and to promote recovery. There are many steps you can take to prepare for an emergency situation.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

It is important to have a list of emergency phone numbers because not all areas of the country have 911 service. As a result, it may be necessary to have telephone numbers for the local police, fire department, and ambulance service. It is also helpful to have a list of phone num-

bers for primary care physicians and specialists for each family member as well as poison control, gas and electric companies, pharmacies, family and friends, home health nurses, and schools.

HEALTH HISTORY

You should know the health history of each family member, including information on any medications, medical conditions, and allergies. **Medical identification tags** are bracelets or necklaces that alert emergency responders to pertinent information about a family member's medical condition, disease, or allergy. It is a good idea to create a health history listing, even if a person has a medical identification tag. Then family members can answer questions from the responders if the tag is unnoticed.

PRECAUTIONS

If you are a first responder on an accident scene, you must take certain precautions. First, evaluate the accident scene to prevent injury to you as the responder and to prevent additional injuries to the victims. When feasible, use barrier devices (e.g., gloves or airway barriers) to avoid contamination and airborne pathogens.



FIGURE 1. Barrier devices (e.g., latex gloves) protect the first responder and the victim by avoiding contamination and airborne pathogens.

Avoid Obvious Dangers

When responding to an accident, avoid obvious dangers (e.g., fire, downed electrical lines, and fallen debris). A first responder must be confident in his or her actions and choices. Panic may affect others and may diminish the responder's ability to keep the situation under control.

Identify Victims in Immediate Danger

First, identify victims in immediate danger. Victims are in immediate danger if they need to be moved to avoid further injuries. For instance, people who sustained injuries in a fire or flood must be moved immediately to a safer location.

Victims also are in immediate danger if they need to be immobilized due to spinal injuries. Recognize the signs to avoid causing further injury by moving someone with such an injury. If you observe no lower body movement; no extremity movement; bruising of spinal vertebra; or if the arms, legs, head, or neck are disfigured, do not move the victim.

If the victim is responsive, treat any bleeding first. Treat any shock symptoms next. If the victim is unresponsive, call 911 immediately. If possible, a bystander should call for help so the

first responder can assess the victim's breathing, circulation, and airway and treat the victim accordingly.

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

First-aid kits are bags or boxes containing medical devices (e.g., medicine, bandages, and other medical-related equipment) used to treat common ailments. The kits come in various sizes for different tasks. A well-stocked first-aid kit is essential to a responder. The responder kit needs to be prepared for a variety of accident situations. Essential supplies include:

- ◆ Absorbent cloth
- ◆ Antihistamine
- ◆ Antimicrobial solution and ointment
- ◆ Antiseptic solution or iodine
- ◆ Aspirin
- ◆ Bacitracin
- ◆ Bandages (general, butterfly, and triangular)
- ◆ Calamine lotion
- ◆ Cold pack
- ◆ Disinfectant
- ◆ Elastic wrap
- ◆ Eye drops
- ◆ Eyedropper
- ◆ Flashlight
- ◆ Gauze pads
- ◆ Gloves
- ◆ Hot pack
- ◆ Matches
- ◆ Mouthpiece
- ◆ Safety pins
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Sewing needle
- ◆ Sugar packets
- ◆ Swabs (cotton tipped)
- ◆ Splints
- ◆ Tape
- ◆ Tweezers



FIGURE 2. Basic first-aid kits contain bandages, ointments, tape, and scissors.

Trained professionals may carry specialized or advanced first-aid kits. These kits may include automatic external defibrillators (AEDs), intravenous fluid, head and neck backboards, and portable oxygen.

Not everyone can carry such an extensive first-aid kit. Therefore, kits come in various sizes for different tasks. Pocket kits carry a limited number of items (e.g., bandages, antibiotic ointment, and tape). Medium kits may be stored in a backpack or a similar bag and contain a few more items (e.g., splints, ointments and creams, and elastic bandages).

BASIC LIFE-SAVING TECHNIQUES

Basic life-saving techniques and first aid can prevent life-threatening injuries and hospital stays. However, the most important life-saving tool used by any first responder is common sense. As a bystander, you can help by evaluating an accident scene. Turn off the engine of a vehicle after an accident to prevent explosions and fires. Remove victims from dangerous areas, and call 911 to get help to the scene as soon as possible.

Assessment: Responsive and Unresponsive Victims

Determine if victims are responsive or unresponsive. **Responsive** victims are people who are injured and conscious. They are able to respond to questions. These victims are usually able to move and may suffer from active choking, bleeding, non-life-threatening wounds, or shock. **Unresponsive** victims are injured and unconscious. They do not respond to questions, and they may have life-threatening injuries that are not visible (e.g., head injuries, cardiac arrest, or choking).

Crowd Dispersal and CPR

First responders may need to disperse a crowd at an accident scene to do their jobs properly. Crowds may hamper rescues or first-aid efforts by causing additional stress and shock to victims or by preventing responders from providing timely care to victims. Also, crowd panic makes caring for victims more difficult.

A **first responder** is a medically trained person who acts within his or her own scope of practice. For instance, when a CPR-certified person assists with CPR, he or she is acting within his or her scope of practice.

GOOD SAMARITAN LAW

The U.S. **Good Samaritan Law** protects civilians from medical lawsuits by allowing people to act within their own scope of practice. The law protects civilian responders from liability in emergency situations, which allows quicker initial care for victims. As a result, if you are certified in CPR and you see a person collapse from an apparent heart attack, you could administer CPR without fear that you would be sued later. The law provides that once victim care has begun, it does not cease until someone of an equal or higher training level replaces the



DIGGING DEEPER...

UNCOVERING ADDITIONAL FACTS: Recent Laws

In January 2007, one governor signed a law that extends the protection for “Good Samaritans.” The law states that people trained in first aid by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, and the National Safety Council are all protected from lawsuits if they help someone who is seriously injured.

The law only covers individuals who do not receive payment for their help, so an off-duty firefighter would be protected from liability, but an EMT on an official call would not be. There is, however, an exception to the law for “willful and wanton misconduct” on the part of the person providing the care.

Use the Internet to learn about all of the protections for “Good Samaritans.”

“Good Samaritan.” The exception is in cases where the situation becomes unsafe or if the civilian becomes exhausted or unable to continue. Variations of this law exist in different states.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Medical emergencies are injuries or illnesses that pose immediate risks to a victim’s long- or short-term health. The **chain of survival** is a sequence of events followed in medical emergencies when a victim does not have a heartbeat or is not breathing. The purpose of the chain of survival is to provide life-saving support for victims who do not have an active heartbeat or who are not breathing. The four stages of the chain of survival are:

1. Early access to the patient
2. Early cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
3. Early defibrillation
4. Early advanced life support

Summary:



There are several steps you can take to prepare for an emergency situation. It is helpful to have a list of emergency phone numbers as well as the medical information for each person in your household. The best advice for administering basic first aid is to use common sense, taking precautions to protect yourself as well as the victim from additional injury.

First-aid kits may be simple packs small enough to fit in your pocket or more elaborate kits for first responders containing dozens of items. First responders must eval-

uate the accident scene, calling for additional medical help when necessary. Good Samaritan laws are in place to protect off-duty trained responders and to encourage them to offer help in emergency situations.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What phone numbers should you have listed in case of an emergency?
2. What precautions should be taken when administering first aid?
3. What items should be included in a first responder's first-aid kit?
4. What is the Good Samaritan Law?
5. What are the four steps in the chain of survival?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Familiarize yourself with the first responders in your community. If possible, interview someone at your local 911 dispatch center. In what cases are police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians (in an ambulance) sent out to respond to calls? Ask the person you interview to share some personal experiences with you. Create a report to share with your class.

Web Links:



First-Aid Kits

<http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.d229a5f06620c6052b1ecfbf43181aa0?vgnextoid=f247e8afd40ee110VgnVCM10000089f0870aRCRD>

Chain of Survival

http://www.chainofsurvival.com/cos/COSoverview_detail.asp

Good Samaritan Laws

<http://definitions.uslegal.com/g/good-samaritans/>