

Frequently Asked Questions – CPR General Questions

What is the AHA chain of survival?

The links in the AHA chain of survival are the actions needed to treat a life-threatening emergency.

The following are the links in the adult chain of survival:

- early recognition of the emergency and activation of the emergency response system
- early CPR
- early defibrillation
- early advanced care



Figure 1: The AHA Adult Chain of Survival

The following are the links in the child and infant chain of survival:

- prevention of injury and arrest
- early CPR
- activation of the emergency response system
- early advanced care



Figure 2: The AHA Child and Infant Chain of Survival

When should I stop CPR?

You should stop CPR when

- The victim starts to move.
 - An AED arrives.
 - Trained help arrives and takes over.
 - You are too exhausted to continue or it's dangerous for you to continue CPR. For example, if you're giving CPR on an airplane, stop during landings. Stop CPR, return to your seat, and fasten your seatbelt. Resume CPR as soon as possible after the plane lands.
 - Trained help tells you to stop.
 - Obvious signs of death become apparent.
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I am afraid to give breaths without a mask. Should I just do nothing if I don't have a mask?

You might consider carrying a mask with you so that you can use it when you are not near a first aid kit with a mask. Some masks fold up very small and fit on a key ring. If your job requires that you use a mask and you don't have a mask with you, do chest compressions until someone brings you a mask or until help arrives and takes over. Chest compressions alone are better than doing nothing.

Can I get into legal trouble if I don't do CPR perfectly?

Doing CPR to the best of your ability is what is expected of you. As long as you are trying to do the right thing and you are not trying to hurt the victim, Good Samaritan laws will protect you in most states.

How do I give CPR to someone who has an opening in her neck?

Some people have an opening that connects the airway directly to the skin. The opening is called a stoma. The opening is at the base of the front of the neck.

To tell whether the victim is breathing normally, place your ear over the stoma. If the person needs breaths, give breaths directly in the stoma.

If I find a victim on a bed, should I move her to the floor so that I have a hard surface under her back?

Move the victim to a firm surface to give CPR. Make sure that you support the victim's head and neck. If you are alone and can't move the victim, find something flat and firm. Slide it under the victim's back to provide a hard surface.

What should I do if the victim is wearing dentures?

Leave the dentures in place if possible. This will help you make an airtight seal around the victim's mouth. If the dentures get in your way or block the victim's airway, remove them.

How long can I stop CPR to move the victim?

Try not to interrupt CPR for more than 10 seconds. If you have to move a victim to safety (eg, from a burning building), move the victim as quickly as possible and then resume CPR. Do not move an injured person unless it is necessary to do CPR or to move you and the victim for safety reasons. If you must move an injured person, move the head, neck and body without twisting or bending the head and neck.

How might a person trained in CPR help at the scene of a cardiac arrest?

- They can phone the emergency response number (or 911) and get the AED.
 - They can assemble the pocket mask and give mouth-to-mask ventilations.
 - They can give CPR.
 - They can use the AED.
 - They can support and direct bystanders, friends, and family.
 - When EMS personnel arrive, they can direct EMS rescuers to the victim's location and can help get information about the patient.
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Does the AHA endorse “cough CPR”?

No. “Cough CPR” is frequently mentioned on the Internet, but the AHA does not endorse it. “Cough CPR” does not work if the victim does not respond. If you think you're having a serious medical problem, such as a heart attack, your first action should be to phone your emergency response number (or 911) to be sure that help is on the way.

Why don't we do a pulse check when giving CPR?

Most lay people and many health care providers are unable to accurately tell within 10 seconds if a pulse is present or absent. It is better to give CPR to a person who might have a pulse than to NOT give CPR to a person who does not have a pulse.
