

## Frequently Asked Questions – CPR Possible Hazards

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### What are some possible hazards of CPR?

If you do CPR incorrectly you can injure the victim. If you perform CPR in the way that you were taught in class, you will reduce the risk of problems. However, some problems, such as broken ribs in the victim, may happen even if you do CPR the right way.

These are some possible problems in performing CPR:

Problem	Possible Result
Wrong hand position for chest compressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Broken ribs or the breaking of the end of the breastbone</li><li>• Bruising or bleeding of the liver, lung, or spleen</li></ul>
Bouncing chest compressions that move the rescuer's hands off the center of the breastbone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ineffective compressions</li><li>• Broken ribs</li></ul>
Compressing the chest too deeply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal injury</li></ul>
Not compressing the breastbone deeply enough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decreased blood flow to the brain and other vital organs with reduced chance that the victim will survive</li></ul>
Using breath volumes that are too big, breathing too rapidly, or not having the airway opened completely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Large amounts of air in the victim's stomach</li></ul>

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### Is it true that I could break someone's ribs by doing CPR?

Yes. Even properly performed chest compressions can cause ribs to break in adult victims. If you hear ribs "cracking," you should check your hand location on the victim's chest. Although broken ribs can cause problems, you must keep in mind that the person is in cardiac arrest and that you are trying to revive him/her. Don't delay CPR or do inadequate chest compressions because you are afraid you might break someone's ribs.

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**Can I catch a disease such as hepatitis or AIDS by doing CPR?**

It is unlikely that a first aid rescuer will become infected with AIDS or hepatitis as a result of doing mouth-to-mouth breathing. CPR has been performed for more than 35 years, and there has never been a documented case of transmission of these diseases from victim to rescuer. Wearing gloves and using a barrier device further minimize the risk of catching diseases.

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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.

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**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.

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**What should I do if the victim vomits?**

Perform these steps if the victim vomits:

Step	Action
1	Turn the victim's head and body to the side so that the victim does not choke on the vomited material
2	If you think there might be a head or neck injury, make sure to turn the victim so that the head and neck do not bend, turn, or twist. That will require 2 rescuers working together.
3	Clear the mouth by sweeping it with a cloth or other material wrapped around your fingers.
4	Reposition the victim and resume CPR

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**Can I give too little or too much air during breathing?**

You should give just enough air to make the chest rise.

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