



First Aid Basics

Unfortunately, most of us will find ourselves, at one time or another, in a situation that requires first aid care. Would you be prepared to help yourself or others? Here are basic guidelines for some common injuries and illnesses:

Cuts & Scrapes

When treating minor cuts and scrapes, keep the following in mind:

- Before administering treatment, wash your hands with soap and water. Wear medical exam gloves, if available.
- Clean the affected area with mild soap and water to remove germs, dirt, and small stones/objects.
- Coat the wound with an antibiotic ointment and cover with a sterile germ-free dressing (adhesive bandage or gauze pad held in place by roller gauze or adhesive strip). Keep the affected area clean and dry.

Seek medical care if the wound will not stop bleeding after applying pressure for about 10 minutes, if you're unable to clean the wound, or if stitches may be required (i.e. the cut is more than 1 inch deep, has jagged edges, is located on the face, eyelids, lips, palm of the hand, or anywhere the skin is taut).

Sprains & Strains

A sprain is an injury to a joint in which the ligaments and other tissues are damaged by violent stretching or twisting. Sprains usually occur when people twist their knee, fall on an outstretched arm, or land on the side of their foot. Symptoms include pain, swelling, bruising, and the inability to use the joint.

A strain occurs when a muscle is stretched beyond its normal range of motion, and tears. This can happen by prolonged, repetitive movement, improper lifting of heavy objects, or overstressing the muscles. Symptoms include pain, stiffness, tenderness when touched, muscle weakness and loss of muscle function.

The RICE formula can be used for the first 24 to 48 hours after the injury to reduce swelling for both sprains and strains:

Rest
Ice
Compression
Elevation

Avoid using the injured body part and apply an ice pack for 20 to 30 minutes, every 2 to 3 hours. Use an elastic bandage to compress the injury and keep the body part elevated above heart level, if possible.



Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

CPR is as easy as ABC. Remember: Airway, Breathing, and Circulation:

- Establish an open airway before determining if the victim can breathe on their own. Tilt the head back and lift the chin if no spine injury is suspected.
- Listen, look and feel for signs of breathing. If the victim is not breathing, give two slow rescue breaths (2 seconds each).
- Check for signs of circulation such as breathing, coughing or movement in response to breaths.

If circulation is needed, perform cardiac compressions. Adults require cycles of 15 chest compressions for every two rescue breaths.

Remember that in any emergency where a victim is unconscious and not breathing on their own, call 911 or emergency services immediately. Keep in mind that these CPR tips are not a substitute for taking a professionally administered CPR training class.

For additional information:

National Safety Council

- First Aid Resource Page, www.nsc.org/issues/firstaid.htm

- Emergency Care Courses, www.nsc.org/train/

American College of Emergency Physicians, www.acep.org

American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org

*Copyright 2004 * National Safety Council * All Rights Reserved. Reviewed 5/05.*