

A.3 DEALING WITH AN EMERGENCY

Emergency situations vary greatly but there are four main steps that always apply:

1. Make the area safe.
2. Evaluate the injured person's condition.
3. Seek help.
4. Give first aid.

A.3.1 STEP 1: MAKE THE AREA SAFE

Your own safety should always come first.

As a first aider, you should:

- try to find out what has just happened;
- check for any danger: is there a threat from traffic, fire, electricity cables, etc.;
- never approach the scene of an accident if you are putting yourself in danger;
- do your best to protect both the injured person(s) and other people on the scene;
- be aware that the property of the injured person is at risk. Theft can occur. So mind your safety, and
- seek police or emergency help if an accident scene is unsafe and you cannot offer help without putting yourself in danger.



An important part of safety also includes washing your hands and wearing gloves or a protection when coming in contact with the injured or sick person's blood or body fluids.

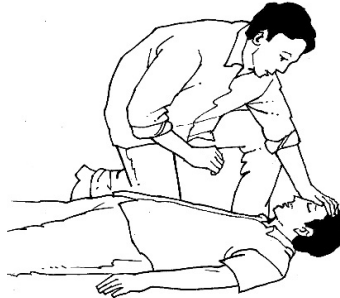


In case of road accidents, as a first aider, you should:

- always follow the traffic rules;
- ask other people to warn traffic about the event;
- if possible, place a warning sign at a good distance, at least 30 meters to either side of the accident, to warn traffic. Do not forget to remove the warning signs afterwards;
- seek help from the police or emergency services;
- not allow anybody to smoke near an accident site;
- switch off the engine of every car involved in the accident; and

- try to apply the handbrake of vehicles involved in the accident to prevent them from moving. You can also put something against the tyres to prevent rolling.

As a general rule, the injured person should not be moved from the scene of an accident. Any movement may make the injury worse if there has been a head, neck, back, and leg or arm injury.



Only move injured people if:

- the injured person is in more danger if he is left there,
- the situation cannot be made safe,
- medical help will not arrive soon, and
- you can do so without putting yourself in danger.

A.3.2 STEP 2: EVALUATE THE CONDITION OF THE SICK OR INJURED PERSON

If it is safe, you can evaluate the sick or injured person's condition. Always check that he is conscious and breathing normally. Situations in which consciousness or breathing are impaired are often life threatening.

Bleeding can also happen inside the body and can be life-threatening although the loss of blood is not seen.

Techniques of resuscitation (CPR), the recovery position, etc. are explained in this manual.

A.3.3 STEP 3: SEEK HELP



Once you have evaluated the sick or injured person's condition you can decide if help is needed urgently.

If help is needed, ask a bystander to call for help. Ask him to come back and confirm that help is underway.

If you call for help, be prepared to have the following information available:

- the location where the help is required (address, street, specific reference points, location; if in a building: floor, room);
- the telephone or mobile number you are calling from;
 - the nature of the problem;
 - what happened (car accident, fall, sudden illness, explosion, ...);
 - how many injured;
 - nature of the injuries (if you know);
 - what type of help is needed:
 - ambulance,
 - police,
 - fire brigade, or
 - other services;
- and any other information that might help.

You might be asked to give your name. Always stay calm and answer their questions calmly. The call takers are professionals and will give you further guidance.

If an ambulance can be obtained in a short time, it is best to call for one and use it to transport the injured or sick person to the healthcare facility. An ambulance is the best way to transport ill or injured persons, but they are not always and everywhere quickly available.

You can always ask the police for help.

If no help is available, you will have to arrange transport yourself (in a van, a truck, a car, an auto-rickshaw, a motorbike, a scooter, a bike-rickshaw, a bike...). Always move the sick or injured person with great care.

A.3.4 STEP 4: PROVIDE FIRST AID

Give first aid in accordance with the instructions given in the following chapters in this manual. When providing first aid, try to protect an ill or injured person from cold and heat.

Do not give anything to eat or drink to a person who is:

- severely injured,
- feeling nausea,
- becoming sleepy, or
- falling unconscious.

❗ In fact, as a general principle, the rule is not to give a casualty anything to drink or eat. Important exceptions include hypothermia (low body temperature), hypoglycaemic shock (low blood sugar in a diabetes patient), diarrhoea and fever leading to dehydration and in case of heat exhaustion or heatstroke. The details can be reviewed in the specific chapters on these conditions.

Be aware that experiencing an emergency situation is a very stressful experience for the injured or sick person.

To support him through the ordeal, follow these simple tips:

- tell the sick or injured person your name, explain how you are going to help him and reassure him. This will help to relax him;
- listen to the person and show concern and kindness;
- make him as comfortable as possible;
- if he is worried, tell him that it is normal to be afraid;
- if it is safe to do so, encourage family and loved ones to stay with him; and
- explain to the sick or injured person what has happened and what is going to happen.

A.3.5 WHEN CAN I STOP PROVIDING FIRST AID?

The question arises when your first aid 'duty' comes to an end?

Within first aid, CPR is a lifesaving activity. But when can you stop giving CPR? There are four reasons allowing you to stop CPR:

- you see a sign of life, such as breathing;
- someone trained in first aid or a medical professional takes over;
- you are too exhausted to continue; or
- the scene becomes unsafe for you to continue.

A.4 STRESS WHEN GIVING FIRST AID

It is only normal to feel stress if you are suddenly faced with the need to give first aid in a real emergency.

Try to bring your emotions under control before you proceed. You may take some time to stand back from the situation and regain your calm. Do not set about the task too hastily and do not under any circumstances place your own safety at risk.

It is not always easy to process a traumatic event emotionally. It is not unusual for first aiders to experience difficulty when working through their emotions afterwards. Talk to your friends, family, fellow first aiders or someone else. If you are still worried, talk to a professional and seek counselling.