

19. First Aid & Emergency Readiness

19.1 Overview

First aid is the immediate care given to someone injured or suddenly ill before professional medical help is available.

According to the **Red Cross** and **WHO**, basic first aid knowledge can reduce preventable deaths from injuries, burns, cardiac arrest, and choking.

Globally, road traffic injuries are a leading cause of death among people aged 5–29 years. ([WHO, 2023](#))

19.2 Causes / Risk Factors

Common emergencies include:

- Accidents, falls, burns, and bleeding injuries.
- Cardiac arrest and choking.
- Bites, allergic reactions, poisoning, and heatstroke.
- Natural disasters or workplace incidents.

19.3 Symptoms / Indicators

Recognizing emergency signs is critical:

- Sudden chest pain, shortness of breath, or collapse (possible heart attack).
- Uncontrolled bleeding or visible fractures.
- Unresponsiveness or convulsions.
- Difficulty breathing or severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

19.4 Prevention / Lifestyle

- Promote safety measures (seat belts, helmets, childproofing).
- Learn CPR and basic life support (BLS).

- Maintain home first aid kits and emergency contact lists.
- Follow safety protocols in workplaces and schools. (Red Cross, 2024)

19.5 Screening / Diagnosis

In emergencies, “primary survey” steps are followed:

1. **Airway** – ensure it’s clear.
2. **Breathing** – check breathing patterns.
3. **Circulation** – check pulse and bleeding.
Rapid triage determines urgency before transfer to medical care.

19.6 Management / Public Health Perspective

Public health systems aim to train laypersons in first aid and CPR.

- **WHO Emergency Care System Framework** promotes pre-hospital response.
- India’s **Good Samaritan Law** encourages bystanders to assist road accident victims without fear of liability.
- Integration of emergency numbers (112, 108) enhances timely care.

Summary Points

- Early first aid saves lives and prevents complications.
- Public awareness and training are key to community resilience.
- Emergency preparedness is a vital public health goal.