



EMERGENCY FIRST AID

St John Ambulance Australia Ltd





The goals of first aid are to:

- **preserve life**
- **alleviate suffering**
- **prevent further illness or injury**
- **promote recovery.**

Emergency first aid is a handy reference if you are giving first aid to an injured or ill person.

It provides **warnings, signs and symptoms**, and **what to do** action plans for the most common injuries and illnesses, or for the treatment of potentially life-threatening conditions.

Emergency first aid will also help you to prepare and protect yourself as a first aider.

It is essential that you do a St John practical training course in first aid. This will give you the confidence to give the right care to your family, friends, colleagues, and the Australian community.

◀ indicates return to the Contents page.

Turn on 'Bookmarks' for easy access to contents!

Contents

Handling an emergency	iv-1	Wound – penetrating chest	39
Danger.	2	Amputation	40
Response	3	Abdominal injury	41
Send for help	4	Nosebleed	42
Airway.	5	Burn and scald	43
Breathing	7	Broken bone (fracture)	45
The recovery position	8	Dislocation	46
Cardiopulmonary resuscitation	9	Sprain and strain.	47
Defibrillation	15	Head injury	48
Choking	18	Spinal and neck injury.	50
Sudden cardiac arrest.	20	Poisoning	51
Angina.	21	Eye injuries	52
Heart attack	22	Heat-induced illness	54
Stroke	24	Hypothermia	56
A medical emergency	25	Bites and stings	57
Allergic reaction	26	Legal considerations.	66
Anaphylaxis.	26	The first aider	69
Asthma emergency	28	First aid	71
Diabetes emergency.	29	Managing an accident scene	76
Epileptic seizure	30	Preventing infection	78
Electric shock.	44	Lifting and moving a patient	80
Fainting	31	Safety and prevention.	81
Febrile convulsion	32	First aid kits.	82
Shock	33	Resources	84
Bleeding – external	34	Index.	88
Bleeding – internal	36		
Wound – open	37		
Wound – embedded and puncture	38		

Handling an emergency

DRSABCD action plan

DANGER? >

Check for danger and ensure the area is safe for:

- yourself
- bystanders
- the patient.



RESPONSE? >

Check for a response:

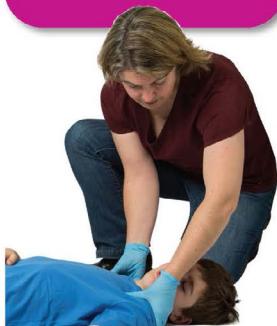
- ask name
- squeeze shoulders.

No response?

Send for help.

Response?

- Make comfortable.
- Monitor breathing and response.
- Manage severe bleeding and then other injuries.



SEND FOR HELP! >

Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance or ask a bystander to make the call.

Stay on the line.

[If alone with the patient and you have to leave to call for help, first turn the patient into recovery position before leaving to calling for an ambulance.]



Handling an emergency

**In an emergency call
triple zero (000) for an ambulance**

AIRWAY? ➤

Open the patient's mouth and check for foreign material.

Foreign material?

- Roll the patient onto their side and clear the airway.

No foreign material?

- Leave the patient in the position found.
- Open the airway by tilting the head back with a chin lift.



BREATHING? ➤

Check for breathing.

Look, listen and feel for 10 seconds.

Not normal breathing?

- Ensure an ambulance has been called.
- Start CPR.

Normal breathing?

- Place in the recovery position.
- Monitor breathing.



CPR!

Start CPR.

30 chest compressions : 2 breaths

Continue CPR until:

- help arrives
- the patient starts breathing normally
- or you are physically unable to continue.



DEFIBRILLATE!

Apply a defibrillator as soon as possible and follow the voice prompts.

Danger

Check for danger to yourself, bystanders and the patient.

What to do

- 1** Before approaching the patient look and listen for any signs of danger.
- 2** Once you have carefully checked to make sure the area is safe, you can approach the patient and check for a response.

Examples of danger and an immediate threat to yourself or bystanders might include:

- electrical wires
- toxic fumes
- wet and slippery surfaces
- unstable structures.

Deep water is a particular hazard. If you are helping a drowning person, do not endanger your own safety. Throw a rope or something that floats and which may aid the victim in keeping their head above water. Call for help.

Note

Make sure that you do not become a patient too. You are no help to the patient if you become injured yourself.

Response

As soon as you have determined that the situation is safe, you need to check if the patient is conscious by checking if they can respond to you.

What to do

1 Gently squeeze the patient's shoulders and ask:

- Can you hear me?
- Open your eyes!
- What is your name? (Remember 'COW')

Or ask the patient to squeeze your hands (both hands should be tried if a stroke is suspected).

Unconscious patient (no response)

- 1** For an unconscious patient, it is important to get help as quickly as possible.
- 2** Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.

Conscious patient (response)

- 1** Leave the patient in the position in which you found them, provided there is no further danger.
- 2** Reassure the patient.
- 3** Manage any life-threatening injuries that need immediate attention, such as severe external bleeding.
- 4** Manage other injuries.
- 5** Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance if the injuries require it.



Send for help

In an emergency, it is important that you call for help as soon as possible. **Call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance, or ask another person to make the call.

Note

If the patient is unconscious and breathing and you are alone with them and have to leave the scene to call triple zero, place the patient in the recovery position first and then go and make the emergency call.

What to do

When you call

- You will be asked if you need police, fire or ambulance.
- Your call will be directed to the service you asked for.
- Speak clearly and answer the questions.
- Stay on the phone until the operator tells you to hang up

Providing location information

- You will be asked where you are.
- Try to provide the suburb, street name, street number, nearest cross-street and your actual location.
- In rural areas, give the full address and distances from landmarks and roads, as well as the property name (and road number if there is one).
- If you make a call while travelling, state the direction you are travelling in, and the last motorway exit or town you passed.



Checking the airway

The patient's airway must be clear and open so that the patient can breathe. Ensure the airway is cleared of obstructions before you treat any other injury.

The airway may be blocked by:

- the back of the patient's tongue
- solid or semisolid material, such as food, vomit or blood
- swelling or injury of the airway
- position of the neck (eg an unconscious seated person with their chin on their chest).

What to do

Adult or child (over 1 year)

- 1 If the adult or child is lying on their back, leave them in that position.

If the adult or child is lying face down, roll them onto their side.

- 2 Open the patient's mouth and look for any blockage. If there is a blockage:

- roll the patient onto their side
- tilt the patient's head back with the mouth slightly downwards
- clear the blockage with your fingers. Only remove dentures if they are loose or broken.

Infant (under 1 year)

- 1 Lay the infant face down on your forearm with their head supported.

- 2 Clear their mouth of any blockage with your little finger.



Airway

Opening the airway

Opening the airway will ensure the patient can breathe. They can be either on their back or on their side if you needed to clear the mouth of any blockage.

What to do

Adult or child (over 1 year)

- 1 Place your hand high on the patient's forehead.
- 2 Place the thumb of your other hand over the patient's chin below their lip, supporting the tip of the jaw with the knuckle of your middle finger. Place your index finger along jaw line.
- 3 Gently tilt the patient's head backwards to bring their tongue away from the back of their throat. Avoid pressure on the neck and soft tissue under the skin.
- 4 Lift the chin, opening the patient's mouth slightly.

Infant (under 1 year)

- 1 Place the infant flat on their back and keep their head in a neutral position.
- 2 If this does not provide an open airway, tilt the infant's head back very slightly to open the airway and gently lift the infant's chin to bring their tongue away from the back of their throat. Avoid pressure on the soft tissue under the infant's chin.

Seated unconscious patient

If a patient is found unconscious in a seated position (e.g. car accident or slumped in a chair) simply tilting the head back, lifting the chin and moving the jaw forward will open the patient's airway.



Breathing

Check for breathing

After you have ensured the airway is clear and open, you should check if the patient is breathing normally. This will tell you whether or not to start CPR.

What to do

Look and feel for chest movement.

- Listen and feel for sounds of air escaping from the mouth and nose (an occasional gasp is not adequate for normal breathing). Take no more than 10 seconds (2-3 breaths) to do this.

Unconscious breathing patient

- Ensure an ambulance has been called — **triple zero (000)**
- Ensure the patient's airway is clear and open.
- Turn the patient into the recovery position.
- Continue to check the patient for normal breathing until medical aid arrives.
- If the patient stops breathing, roll them onto their back and start CPR.
- If, during CPR, the patient starts breathing but is still unconscious, turn them back into the recovery position.
- Continue to check the patient. Be ready to turn the patient onto their back again and restart CPR if breathing stops.



The recovery position

What to do

Adult or child (over 1 year)

- 1** With the patient on their back, kneel beside the patient and position their arms.
 - Place the patient's furthest arm directly out from their body.
 - Place the patient's nearest arm across their chest.
- 2** Position the patient's legs.
 - Lift the patient's nearest leg at the knee and place their foot on the floor so the leg is bent.
- 3** Roll the patient into position.
 - Roll the patient away from you onto their side, carefully supporting their head and neck the whole time.
- 4** Keep the patient's leg bent with their knee touching the ground to prevent the patient rolling onto their face.
- 5** Place the patient's hand under their chin to stop their head from tilting and to keep their airway open.

Infant (under 1 year)

- 1** Lie the infant face down on your forearm.
- 2** Support the infant's head with your hand.



Cardiopulmonary resuscitation

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation is given to a patient when they are unconscious and not breathing normally.

CPR is the repeated action of giving 30 chest compressions followed by 2 breaths.

- Compressions should be given at a rate of 2 compressions per second (approx. 100–120 compressions per minute).
- Try to achieve 5 sets of 30 compressions and 2 breaths in about 2 minutes.
- The first aider should minimise interruptions to chest compressions.

Changing the person doing CPR

If two first aiders are present, or if a second person arrives to help, it is possible to change the person doing CPR, if necessary.

- 1 Before changing over, ensure that an ambulance has been called.
- 2 Change over smoothly with minimal interference to the resuscitation procedure.
- 3 Changes should be done approximately every 2 minutes to minimise tiredness.

When to stop CPR

The first aider should continue CPR until any of the following conditions have been met:

- the patient begins breathing normally
- you are physically unable to continue.
- more qualified help arrives and takes over
- a healthcare professional directs that CPR be ceased.

Note

- Any attempt at resuscitation is better than no attempt at all.
- If a first aider is unwilling or unable to give breaths, giving compressions only will be better than not doing CPR at all.
- Children (1–8 years of age) should be managed as for adults.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation

Compressions for an adult or child (over 1 year)

What to do

Give compressions with the patient on a firm surface.

- 1** Place the patient on their back.
- 2** Kneel beside the patient's chest. Position yourself vertically above the patient's chest.
- 3** Locate the lower half of the sternum (breastbone) in the centre of the chest.
- 4** Place the heel of one hand on the lower half of the sternum and the heel of your other hand on top of the first hand.
- 5** Interlock the fingers of your hands and raise your fingers.
- 6** With your arms straight, press down on the patient's chest (their sternum) until it is compressed by about one-third.
- 7** Release the pressure. Pressing down and releasing is 1 compression.
- 8** Give 30 compressions.



Cardiopulmonary resuscitation

Giving breaths for an adult or child (over 1 year)

What to do

- 1** Open the airway using the head tilt and chin lift.
 - Place one hand on the patient's forehead or top of their head.
 - Use the other hand on the chin to tilt their head (not the neck) backwards. Avoid pressure on the neck and soft tissue under the skin.
- 2** Give breaths.
 - With the head tilted backwards, pinch the soft part of the nose closed with your index finger and thumb, or seal the nose with your cheek.
 - Open the patient's mouth by placing your thumb over the chin below the lip and supporting the tip of jaw with the knuckle of middle finger. Place your index finger along jaw line. The chin is held up by your thumb and fingers in order to open the mouth and keep the airway clear.
 - Take a breath and place your lips over the patient's mouth, ensuring a good seal.
 - Blow steadily for about 1 second, watching for the chest to rise.
 - Turn your mouth away from the patient's mouth and watch for chest to fall, and listen and feel for signs of air being expelled. Maintain head tilt and chin lift.
 - Take another breath and repeat the sequence. This is now 2 breaths.

If the chest does not rise, recheck the mouth and remove any obstructions. Make sure the head is tilted and chin lifted, and ensure there is a good seal around the mouth (or mouth and nose).



Cardiopulmonary resuscitation

Compressions for an infant (under 1 year)

What to do

Give compressions with the patient on a firm surface.

- 1** Place the patient on their back.
- 2** Kneel beside the patient's chest.
Position yourself vertically above the patient's chest.
- 3** Locate the lower half of the sternum (breastbone) in the centre of the chest.
- 4** Place 2 fingers over the lower half of the sternum.
- 5** Press down on the patient's chest until it is compressed by about one-third.
- 6** Release the pressure. Pressing down and releasing is 1 compression.
- 7** Give 30 compressions.



Cardiopulmonary resuscitation

Giving breaths for an infant (under 1 year)

What to do

- 1 Tilt the infant's head back very slightly.
- 2 Lift the infant's chin to bring their tongue away from the back of their throat.
- 3 Avoid pressure on the neck and the soft tissue under the chin.
- 4 Give breaths.
 - Place your lips over the infant's mouth and nose, ensuring a good seal.
 - Blow steadily for about 1 second, watching for the chest to rise.
 - Turn your mouth away from the infant's mouth and watch for chest to fall, and listen and feel for signs of air being expelled. Maintain head tilt and chin lift.
 - Take another breath and repeat the sequence. This is now 2 breaths.

If the chest does not rise, recheck the mouth and remove any obstructions, and ensure there is a good seal around the mouth and nose.



Note

In infants, the head should be kept neutral. Do not use a maximum head tilt because the upper airway in infants is easily obstructed because the trachea (windpipe) is soft. The trachea can be distorted by an excessive backward head tilt or chin lift.

The lower jaw should be supported at the point of the chin with the mouth maintained open. There must be no pressure on the soft tissues of the neck. If this does not provide a clear airway, the head may be tilted backwards very slightly with a gentle movement.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation

What to do

Drowning patient

- 1** Remove the victim from the water as soon as possible, but do not endanger your own safety. Throw a rope or something that floats and which may aid the victim in keeping their head above water. Call for help.
- 2** Follow DRSABCD.
- 3** If the patient is unconscious and not breathing normally, start CPR.
- 4** If the patient is breathing place them into the recovery position and continue to check their breathing.
- 5** Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance for all drowning patients, even if the event is seemingly minor or the patient appears to have recovered fully.

Patient in a wheelchair

If the patient is in a wheelchair and requires CPR, carefully and safely take the patient out of the wheelchair and place them onto their back to start CPR.

Pregnant patient

If a woman in an advanced state of pregnancy requires CPR.

- 1** Place her on her back with her shoulders flat.
- 2** Place padding under her right buttock to tilt her pelvis to the left.
- 3** If there is not enough padding available to achieve a definite tilt, a second person should hold the patient's pelvis tilted to the left while CPR is performed. Do not delay CPR to find padding.

Defibrillation

Signs and symptoms	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Defibrillation is given to a patient whose has suffered a sudden cardiac arrest—their heart has stopped beating normally. ■ The patient is unconscious and not breathing normally. 	<p>Prepare the patient</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Expose the patient's chest, removing any clothes if necessary, including a bra. 2 If the patient's chest is damp or wet, wipe it down with a towel to ensure it is dry before applying the defibrillator pads. 3 Remove any medication patches located where the pads will be applied. 4 Remove or move any jewellery where the pads will be applied. 5 Check for pacemaker or implant scars – found between the collarbone and the top of the breast, or either side of the chest.



Also see sudden cardiac arrest, page 20

Defibrillation

What to do

Apply the pads

- Open the defibrillator case.
- Follow the defibrillator's automatic prompts, which will tell you where the pads are to be placed on the patient's chest.
- If there is a second first aider, CPR should continue while the pads are being placed.

On an adult

- 1 Place one pad to the patient's right chest wall, below the collarbone.
- 2 Place the other pad on the patient's left chest wall, below the left nipple.

Check for pacemaker or implant scars—found between the collarbone and the top of the breast, or either side of the chest.

If an implant is identified, place the pad at least 8 cm away from the site. Do not place the pad on top of the pacemaker or implant site.

On a child under 8 years

Use a defibrillator with child pads.

- 1 Place one pad in the centre of the patient's chest, between the nipples.
- 2 Place the other pad in the centre of the patient's back, between the shoulder blades.

If child pads are not available, adult pads should be used. Place adult pads as you would on an adult, ensuring the pads do not touch.

If insufficient space on the child's chest, one pad can be placed on the chest, and the other on the back.



Defibrillation



What to do

Using the defibrillator

- 1 Once the pads are placed, the machine will provide visual or vocal automatic instructions (depending on the make of defibrillator).
- 2 It is important that no one touches the patient during the analysis and shock process.
If a person has been performing CPR, they should stop and move slightly away so they are not in contact with the patient.
- 3 The defibrillator will analyse the heart and determine whether a shock should be given.
- 4 After the shock is delivered, continue CPR until medical assistance arrives.
- 5 If the patient starts breathing normally, place them in the recovery position.
 - DO NOT remove the pads.
 - DO NOT turn off the defibrillator.
- 6 Continue to check the patient's breathing. Be prepared to begin CPR again if the patient stops breathing normally.

Choking

What to do

Choking adult or child (over 1 year)

- 1 Encourage the patient to relax. Ask the patient to cough to remove the object.
- 2 If coughing does not remove the blockage, **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance.
- 3 Bend the patient well forward and give up to 5 sharp blows on the back between the shoulder blades with the heel of one hand. Check if the blockage has been removed after each blow.
- 4 If the blockage has not cleared after 5 back blows, give up to 5 chest thrusts by placing one hand in the middle of the patient's back for support and the heel of the other on the lower half of the sternum. Thrusts should be slower and sharper than CPR compressions. Check if the blockage has been removed after each thrust.
- 5 If the blockage has not cleared after 5 thrusts, continue alternating 5 back blows with 5 chest thrusts until medical aid arrives.
- 6 If the patient becomes blue, limp or unconscious, **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance and follow DRSABCD.

Warning

If the patient becomes blue, limp or unconscious, follow DRSABCD and **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance.

Signs and symptoms

- clutching the throat
- coughing, wheezing, gagging
- difficulty in breathing, speaking or swallowing
- making a whistling or 'crowing' noise, or no sound at all
- blue lips, face, earlobes, fingernails
- loss of consciousness



What to do

Choking infant (under 1 year)

- 1 Immediately **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance. Stay on the phone.
- 2 Place the infant with their head downwards on your forearm, supporting the head and shoulders on your hand.
- 3 Hold the infant's mouth open with your fingers.
- 4 Give up to 5 sharp blows to the back between the shoulders with the heel of one hand, checking if the blockage has been removed after each blow.
- 5 If the blockage has come loose or been removed, roll the infant into their side and remove any object that may have come loose with your little finger.
- 6 If the blockage has not been removed after 5 back blows, place the infant on their back on a firm surface.
- 7 Place 2 fingers on the lower half of the sternum and give up to 5 chest thrusts, checking if the blockage has been removed after each thrust. Support the infant's head with the other hand.
- 8 If the blockage has not been removed after 5 thrusts, continue alternating 5 back blows with 5 chest thrusts until medical aid arrives.
- 9 If the infant becomes unconscious, start CPR.



Sudden cardiac arrest

What to do

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3** Start CPR.
- 4** Decide to defibrillate if the patient:
 - is unconscious
 - is not breathing normally.
- 5** Continue CPR while the defibrillator is being collected and the pads applied.
- 6** Prepare the patient.
- 7** Apply the pads.
- 8** Use the defibrillator.
- 9** Continue CPR until the patient pushes you away or it is clear that they are breathing normally or responding, or until medical aid arrives.
 - DO NOT remove the defibrillator pads.
 - DO NOT turn the defibrillator off.

Signs and symptoms

- unexpected collapse
- not breathing normally
- unresponsive

Warning

Sudden cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time. Many patients have no warning signs or symptoms.

The only effective treatment for cardiac arrest, outside of hospital, is using a defibrillator to deliver an electric shock to the patient's heart.

You can do no harm by connecting a defibrillator, because the defibrillator will detect if a shock is needed or not.



What to do

- 1 Encourage the patient to immediately stop what they are doing and rest.
- 2 Help the patient to sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- 3 Ask the patient to describe their symptoms.
 - Have they had these symptoms before? If yes, do they have angina medication?
 - If the patient has not had these symptoms before and they do not have prescribed medication, treat the patient as for a heart attack.
- 4 Help the patient to take their prescribed angina medication.
- 5 If symptoms are not relieved within 5 minutes, help the patient to take another dose of their medication.
- 6 If the pain settles quickly, recommend that the patient seek medical aid as soon as possible.
- 7 If any of the symptoms are severe, get worse quickly or have lasted 10 minutes, **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance. Stay on the phone and wait for advice from the operator.
- 8 Stay with the patient until medical aid arrives.
- 9 Be prepared to give CPR if any of the symptoms worsen.

Signs and symptoms

- mild to severe tight, gripping or squeezing pain or discomfort usually in the centre of the chest
- pain that may spread from the chest to one or both shoulders, the back, neck, jaws, arms or hands
- pain in one or both shoulders, the back, neck, jaws, arms or hands, but not in the chest
- shortness of breath

Warning

If the patient has chest pain or discomfort similar to angina but it is not relieved by medication and rest, you should treat the patient as if they are having a heart attack.



Heart attack

Warnings

- Having one or more signs or symptoms of a heart attack means this is a life-threatening emergency.
- Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance immediately.
- It is advised NOT to drive the patient to the hospital yourself, as you may need to perform CPR.

Signs and symptoms

The warning signs of heart attack vary. Symptoms can start suddenly, or develop over time and get progressively worse.

People may have just one symptom or a combination of symptoms. The patient may feel discomfort or pain in the centre of the chest.

This pain may:

- start suddenly, or start slowly over minutes
- be described as tightness, heaviness, fullness or squeezing
- be severe, moderate or mild.

Chest pain may spread from:

- discomfort in the neck or a choking or burning feel in the throat
- an ache, heaviness or pressure around one or both shoulders
- pain, discomfort, heaviness or uselessness in one or both arms
- an ache or tightness in/around the jaw
- a dull ache between the shoulder blades
- pain, heaviness, tightness or crushing sensation in the centre of the chest.

Not all patients feel chest discomfort—more than 40% of women do not experience chest pain.

The patient can also feel:

- short of breath
- nauseous
- faint or dizzy
- a cold sweat.

What to do

Unconscious patient

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Place the patient in the recovery position.
- 3 **Call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance. Stay on the phone. Stay with the patient until medical aid arrives.
- 4 Be prepared to give CPR if symptoms worsen.

Conscious patient

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Encourage the patient to immediately stop what they are doing and rest.
- 3 Help the patient to sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- 4 Reassure the patient. Loosen any tight clothing.
- 5 If the patient has been prescribed medication such as a tablet or mouth spray to treat episodes of chest pain or discomfort associated with angina, help them to take this as they have been directed.
- 6 Ask the patient to describe their symptoms.
- 7 If any of the symptoms:
 - are severe
 - get worse quickly
 - have lasted 10 minutes**call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance. Stay on the phone. Wait for advice from the operator.
- 8 Give 300 milligrams of aspirin (usually one tablet) unless the patient is allergic to aspirin or their doctor has warned them against taking aspirin.
- 9 Stay with the patient until medical aid arrives.
- 10 Be prepared to give CPR if symptoms worsen.

Stroke

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3 Reassure the patient. The patient may not be able to clearly communicate which may cause them extreme anxiety.
- 4 Help the patient to sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Support the patient's head and shoulders on pillows.
- 5 Loosen any tight clothing.
- 6 Keep the patient warm, with a blanket if necessary.
- 7 Wipe away any secretions from the patient's mouth.



Note

Act **FAST** if you recognise the following signs of a stroke:

F – **f**acial weakness
A – **a**rm weakness
S – **s**peech difficulty
T – **t**ime to act fast

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Signs and symptoms

- feeling of numbness in face, arm or leg
- disturbed vision
- loss of balance
- weakness or paralysis, especially on one side of the body
- faintness, dizziness
- confusion
- loss of consciousness
- difficulty speaking or understanding

A medical emergency

If you are managing somebody who is suffering a sudden medical emergency, follow these general first aid guidelines.

What to do

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** Prevent further injury; protect the patient.
- 3** Provide reassurance to the patient.
- 4** Provide any specific care that will help the condition, or assist the patient with their action plan if they have one.
- 5** Help the patient to rest comfortably.
- 6** Monitor breathing and response.
- 7** If necessary **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance.

People live with conditions such as asthma, diabetes and epilepsy without a noticeable effect on their lifestyles.

However, a medical emergency can arise unexpectedly from complications of these disorders, and the cause is not always immediately evident.

Patients may have items with them that give vital clues about the emergency. Medical warning items such as a Medic-Alert® bracelet, puffer, or an adrenaline auto-injector can all be clues as to what has caused the emergency.

It is often difficult for the first aider to decide when to send for emergency medical help. If the problem does not resolve itself quickly, or you have doubts about its severity, it is better to be safe than sorry — **call triple zero (000)** and ask for an ambulance.

Allergic reaction - mild to moderate

What to do

- 1** Reassure the patient. Stay with the patient.
(Remove the sting if an insect allergy.)
- 2** Give medications if prescribed.
- 3** Continue to check the patient's breathing and pulse.

Signs and symptoms

The following signs and symptoms of a **mild to moderate allergic reaction** may precede anaphylaxis:

- sneezing
- swelling of lips, face and eyes
- watery or itchy eyes
- hives, welts or body redness
- tingling mouth

Severe allergic reaction - anaphylaxis

Warning

- Anaphylaxis is potentially life-threatening. People with severe allergies should have an anaphylaxis action plan and an adrenaline auto-injector. They may wear a medical alert device (eg a bracelet).
- In a severe allergic reaction, you should use any available adrenaline auto-injector.
- If someone with known asthma and allergy to food, insects or medication has sudden breathing difficulties, **always give adrenaline first**, than the asthma reliever. (© allergyfacts.org.au)

Signs and symptoms

The main symptoms of a **severe allergic reaction** are rapidly developing breathing and circulation problems. Other signs and symptoms may include:

- wheeze or persistent cough
- difficult or noisy breathing
- difficulty talking; a hoarse voice
- swelling of face and tongue
- swelling in the throat
- abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea
- hives, welts or body redness
- faintness, dizziness
- confusion
- loss of consciousness
- pallor and floppiness (in young children).

What to do

Unconscious patient

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Administer an adrenaline auto-injector immediately, if available.

Conscious patient

- 1 If the patient is carrying an adrenaline auto-injector, it should be used immediately.
- 2 Ask the patient if they need your help to use the injector. Only help the patient if they request it. If the patient is unable to give verbal consent, administer an adrenaline auto-injector immediately.
- 3 Help the patient to lie down flat. If breathing is difficult, allow the patient to sit but not stand.
- 4 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 5 Monitor the patient. If there is no improvement after 5 minutes, give another adrenaline auto-injector, if available.
- 6 If breathing stops, follow DRSABCD.



How to give EpiPen® auto-injectors

PULL, PLACE and PUSH for 3 seconds.

- 1 Form a fist around the EpiPen® and **pull off the blue safety release**.
- 2 Hold the patient's leg still and **place the orange end** against the patient's outer mid-thigh (with or without clothing).
- 3 **Push down hard** until a click is heard or felt, and hold in place for 3 seconds.
- 4 **Remove** the EpiPen®.

All EpiPens® should be held in place for 3 seconds regardless of instructions on the device's label.

Asthma emergency

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.**
- 2 Help the patient** to sit down in a comfortable position. Stay and reassure.
- Help the patient to follow their action plan if they have one.
- 3 Give 4 puffs of the reliever.**
 - Use a spacer if available, and shake the inhaler before giving initial puffs.
 - Give 1 puff at a time with 4 breaths after each puff.
- 4 Wait 4 minutes.**
 - If there is no improvement, give 4 more puffs: 1 puff at a time with 4 breaths after each puff.
- 5** If the patient still cannot breathe normally, call **Triple Zero (000)** and ask for an ambulance.
- 6** Keep giving 4 puffs every 4 minutes (as above) until medical aid arrives.



Signs and symptoms

Mild to moderate asthma attack

- increasingly soft to loud wheeze
- persistent cough
- minor to obvious difficulty breathing

Emergency asthma

- symptoms get worse very quickly
- little or no relief from inhaler
- severe shortness of breath, focused only on breathing
- unable to speak normally
- pale, sweating
- progressively more anxious, subdued or panicky
- blue lips, face, earlobes, fingernails
- loss of consciousness

Warning

- An asthma emergency is potentially life-threatening.
- Most people who suffer asthma attacks are aware of their asthma and should have an action plan and medication. They may wear a medical alert device.
- In an emergency or if a patient does not have their own reliever, use another person's reliever or (where permitted under local state or territory regulations) one from a first aid kit.
- If the patient is having difficulty breathing but has not previously had an asthma attack, you can use another person's inhaler or one from a first aid kit (where permitted under local state or territory regulations).

Diabetes emergency



Signs and symptoms

High blood sugar

- excessive thirst
- tiredness
- blurred vision
- hot, dry skin
- smell of acetone on breath

Low blood sugar

- weakness, shaking
- sweating
- headache
- faintness, dizziness
- lack of concentration
- teariness or crying
- irritability or altered behaviour
- hunger
- numbness around the lips and fingers

These may progress quickly to:

- slurred speech
- confusion
- loss of consciousness
- seizures.

What to do

High blood sugar (hyperglycaemia)

- 1 If the patient has medication, ask if they need assistance administering it.
- 2 Encourage the patient to drink water.
- 3 Seek medical aid if symptoms worsen.
- 4 If the patient has not yet been diagnosed with diabetes, encourage them to seek medical aid.

Low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia)

- 1 Help the patient to sit or lie in a comfortable position. Reassure the patient. Loosen any tight clothing.
- 2 Give the patient sugar, such as a soft drink (not 'diet' eg Coke Zero, Pepsi Max), fruit juice, sugar, jellybeans or glucose tablets.
- 3 Continue giving sugar every 15 minutes until the patient recovers.
- 4 Follow with carbohydrates, eg a sandwich or dry biscuits and cheese, milk, fresh dry fruit.
- 5 If there is no improvement in symptoms or the patient becomes unconscious, **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance.

Note

- If you are unsure whether the patient has low or high blood sugar, give them a drink containing sugar (DO NOT use 'diet' soft drinks, eg Coke Zero, Pepsi Max).
- Giving any form of sugar can save a patient's life if blood sugar is low, and will not cause undue harm if blood sugar is high.
- First aiders are advised to be guided by the person with diabetes, and to follow the patient's own action plan.
- If a glucometer is available and a person present is trained to use it, it may provide useful information for the person's further care. It should not delay other treatment.

Epileptic seizure

What to do

During the seizure

- 1 Protect the patient from injury by removing any objects that could cause injury.
- 2 Protect the patient's head by placing something soft under their head and shoulders.
- 3 Time the seizure.

After the seizure

- 4 Put the patient in the recovery position as soon as jerking stops, or immediately if they have vomited or have food or fluid in their mouth.
- 5 Manage any injuries resulting from the seizure.
- 6 DO NOT disturb the patient if they fall asleep, but continue to check their breathing.
- 7 Calmly talk to the patient until they regain consciousness. Let them know where they are, that they are safe, and that you will stay with them while they recover.
- 8 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance if:
 - the seizure continues for more than 5 minutes or a second seizure quickly follows
 - the patient remains unresponsive for more than 5 minutes after a seizure stops
 - the patient has been injured
 - the patient has diabetes or is pregnant
 - you know, or believe it to be the patient's first seizure.

Warning

During a seizure:

- DO NOT try to restrain the person or stop the jerking
- DO NOT put anything in their mouth
- DO NOT move the person unless they are in danger.

Signs and symptoms

A patient having an epileptic seizure may:

- suddenly cry out
- fall to the ground, sometimes resulting in injury
- stiffen and lie rigid for a few seconds
- have rhythmic jerking muscular movements
- look very pale and have blue lips
- have excessive saliva coming out of their mouth
- sometimes bite the tongue or cheek, resulting in blood in the saliva
- lose control of their bladder or bowel
- be extremely tired, confused or agitated afterwards.



Fainting

Warning

DO NOT sit the patient on a chair with their head between their knees.

Signs and symptoms

- pale, cool, moist skin
- numbness in the fingers and toes
- nausea
- faintness, dizziness
- confusion
- loss of consciousness

What to do

People usually recover from fainting quickly, often within seconds, without any lasting effects.

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Lie the patient down on their back with their legs elevated.
- 3 Loosen any tight clothing.
- 4 Ensure plenty of fresh air – open a window if possible.
- 5 Treat any injury resulting from a fall.
- 6 If fainting is the result of an underlying medical condition, advise the patient to seek medical aid.

Fainting is a partial or complete loss of consciousness caused by a temporary reduction of blood flow to the brain.

Fainting can occur at any time and may be triggered by:

- emotional shock
- pain
- overexertion
- exhaustion
- lack of food
- sight of blood
- low blood pressure
- standing still in hot conditions.



Febrile convolution

What to do

During the convolution

- 1 Roll the patient onto their side for safety.
- 2 DO NOT restrain the patient.

After the convolution

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Remove excess clothing or wrappings.
- 3 Seek medical aid.



Warning

- DO NOT cool the child by sponging or bathing, but do remove excess clothing.

Signs and symptoms

A rapid rise in body temperature can cause convulsions. This occurs most often in children aged 6 months to 5 years, and can occur with a temperature change from the normal 37°C to as little as 38.5°C.

Symptoms include:

- fever
- muscle stiffening
- twitching or jerking of face or limbs
- eyes rolling upwards
- blue lips, face, earlobes, fingernails
- loss of consciousness.

Warning

- Any health condition or trauma can cause shock.
- Shock is a life-threatening condition.
- It is important that you treat the injury or illness that is causing the shock, as well as treating the shock and the person as a whole.

Signs and symptoms

Initial shock

- pale face, fingernails, lips
- sweaty, cool, moist skin
- faintness, dizziness
- nausea
- anxiety

Severe shock

- restlessness
- thirst
- weak, rapid pulse, which may become weaker or slower
- shallow, fast breathing
- drowsiness, confusion
- blue lips, face, earlobes, fingernails (this is a late sign and means the patient is very sick)
- capillary refill is more than 2 seconds
- a decreased level of consciousness
- unconsciousness

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Help the patient to lie down. DO NOT raise their legs.
- 3 Reassure the patient.
- 4 Manage severe bleeding then treat other injuries.
- 5 Loosen any tight clothing.
- 6 Keep the patient warm with a blanket or similar. DO NOT use any source of direct heat.
- 7 Give the patient small amounts of cool water to drink frequently if they are conscious, do not have abdominal trauma and are unlikely to require an operation immediately.
- 8 Place the patient in the recovery position if they have difficulty breathing, become unconscious or are likely to vomit.
- 9 Seek medical aid or **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance if the patient's injuries require it.



Bleeding - severe, external

Signs and symptoms	Warning
<p>As well as the obvious sign of blood coming from a wound, signs and symptoms of severe bleeding include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ weak, rapid pulse ■ pale, cool, moist skin ■ pallor, sweating ■ rapid, gasping breathing ■ restlessness ■ nausea ■ thirst ■ faintness, dizziness or confusion ■ loss of consciousness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Any severe bleeding should be stopped as soon as possible. ■ Bleeding should be managed as severe and life-threatening if it cannot be controlled by firm, direct and continuous pressure, and/or there are signs of shock. ■ If it is obvious that severe and life-threatening bleeding is present, controlling bleeding before the Airway and Breathing can be lifesaving. ■ Send for help early by calling triple zero (000) for an ambulance.

Using arterial tourniquets

Arterial tourniquets should only be used for life-threatening bleeding from a limb, where the bleeding cannot be controlled by firm, direct and continuous pressure.

- Do not apply over a joint or wound, clothing or wet suits
 - Do not cover the tourniquet with any bandages or clothing
 - Apply in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions (or 5 cm above the bleeding point if there are no instructions).
- 1 Tighten until the bleeding stops. Warn the patient that this will cause pain.
 - 2 If the bleeding does not stop, check the position of the tourniquet and how it has been applied.
 - 3 If bleeding continues, a second tourniquet (if available) should be applied to the limb, preferably above the first.

In the context of life-threatening bleeding, an improvised tourniquet (ideally of a similar broad width to commercial types) is likely to be better than no tourniquet.

Ensure an ambulance has been called – **triple zero (000)**, as prolonged use of a constrictive bandage can starve tissues of blood and cause them to die.

Bleeding - severe, external

What to do

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** Help the patient to lie down.
- 3** Remove or cut the patient's clothing to expose the wound.
- 4** Apply firm, direct and continuous pressure on the bleeding wound initially with your hands until the bleeding stops. The patient or a bystander can do this.
- 5** When available, apply a pad or dressing in or directly over the wound and apply firm, direct and continuous pressure until the bleeding stops.
 - If an object is embedded in or protruding from a wound, apply pressure on either side of the wound and place pads around the object before bandaging.
- 6** Once bleeding is controlled secure the pad by bandaging firmly, ensuring the pad remains directly over the wound. Observe for any further bleeding.
- 7** Continue to check the patient's vital signs (consciousness, breathing and pulse) and look for recurrence of bleeding.

If the bleeding is not controlled and:

- 8** the bleeding is on a limb, apply an arterial tourniquet (if available) and tightened until the bleeding stops. Advise the patient that this will cause pain.
- 9** the bleeding is not on a limb, remove existing dressings and apply a haemostatic dressing (if available) in or directly over the wound and apply firm, direct and continuous pressure until the bleeding stops.
- 10** Call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 11** Do not give the severely bleeding patient any food or drink.

Bleeding - internal

What to do

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3** Lay the patient down with their knees bent or legs raised – a pillow may be used under the head to increase comfort.
- 4** If the patient is coughing up frothy blood, help the patient to sit down in a comfortable position – this is normally half sitting up.
- 5** Reassure the patient. Loosen any tight clothing.
- 6** DO NOT give the patient anything to eat or drink.



Warning

- Internal bleeding is usually more serious than external bleeding. Although there is no visible loss of blood, blood is lost from the circulatory system and vital organs, which may result in shock.

Signs and symptoms

Internal bleeding can be difficult to recognise and assess. Signs and symptoms include:

- pain
- tenderness
- rigidity of abdominal muscles
- distension or swelling
- other signs of blood loss, especially pallor, sweating, faintness or thirst.

Other evidence may include:

- coughing up red, frothy blood
- vomiting material that is obviously blood or may be coloured black
- passing faeces with a black, tarry appearance
- passing faeces that are red
- passing urine that has a red or smoky appearance.

Internal bleeding may be accompanied by any of the signs and symptoms of severe external bleeding.

Wound - open

Warning	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Other injuries, such as a broken bone, may be under a wound. Take care in treating any wound. ■ Seek medical aid for dirty or penetrating wounds because tetanus or other serious infections may occur. 	<p>Cleaning a minor wound</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Check that you have the required first aid equipment: gloves, goggles, saline or clean water, sterile gauze, garbage bin. 2 Wash your hands, put on gloves and set up the equipment. 3 Soak sterile gauze with saline or water. 4 Clean the wound thoroughly: swab the wound from inner to outer edge, throwing away each piece of gauze after one swab. Do not dab at the wound. 5 Visually check the wound for infection. 6 Apply a soft, dry dressing and fix in position. 7 Dispose of used material. 8 Clean trolleys and workbenches. 9 Dispose of gloves and wash your hands.



Open wounds can be classified according to their cause:

- **abrasions**, where the skin is scraped across a hard surface and the outer layer of skin and tiny blood vessels are exposed
- **cut (or incision)**, where skin, soft tissue or muscles are severed by something sharp
- **tear (or avulsion)**, where skin and other soft tissues are partially or completely torn away
- **laceration**, where layers of skin and underlying tissues are damaged
- **puncture**, where skin and underlying tissue is damaged by blunt or pointed objects
- **amputation**, when a part of the body is partly or completely cut or torn off.

Wound - embedded and puncture

What to do

- 1 Control bleeding by applying pressure to the surrounding areas but not on the object.
- 2 Place padding around the object or place a ring pad over the object and a bandage over the padding.
- 3 If the length of the object causes it to protrude outside the pad, take care to bandage only each side of the object.
- 4 Rest the injured part in a comfortable position.
- 5 Seek medical aid. Consider **calling triple zero (000)** for an ambulance depending on the depth of the wound and the severity of any bleeding.

A puncture wound with a donut ring (made with a triangular bandage) and held in place with bandaging.



An embedded object wound with two bandage rolls on either side of the object, and held in place with bandaging.



Warning

- DO NOT try to remove the object as it may be plugging the wound and restricting bleeding. Removing it may result in severe bleeding or may damage deep structures.
- DO NOT put any pressure on the object.
- DO NOT try to cut the end of the object unless its size makes it unmanageable.

Wound - penetrating chest

Warning	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A penetrating chest wound can cause severe internal damage in the chest and upper abdomen. 	<p>Unconscious breathing patient</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Follow DRSABCD. 2 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance. 3 Place the patient in the recovery position, with the injured side down. <p>Conscious patient</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Follow DRSABCD. 2 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance. 3 Help the patient to sit down in a comfortable position – this is normally half sitting, leaning to the injured side. 4 Stop any bleeding by applying pressure to the wound at the point of bleeding if possible 5 Then cover the wound with a sterile or clean dressing and secure loosely with tape. 6 Continue to check the patient's breathing. If the patient suddenly deteriorates following the application of any dressing to the chest, the dressing must be removed immediately. 7 Check for an exit wound, especially if injury caused by violent trauma (eg gunshot wound).



Amputation

What to do

The patient

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3 Apply direct pressure to the wound.
- 4 Apply a sterile dressing and bandage.

The amputated part

- 1 DO NOT wash or soak the amputated part in water or any other liquid.
- 2 Wrap the part in gauze or material and place in a watertight container, such as a sealed watertight plastic bag.
- 3 Place the sealed container in cold water that has had ice (if available) added to it. The severed part should not be in direct contact with the ice.
- 4 Send the part to the hospital with the patient.

Signs and symptoms

- Part of the body cut or torn off, either partially or completely.



Abdominal injury

Warning

- DO NOT give the patient anything to eat or drink.
- DO NOT try to push organs back into the abdomen.
- DO NOT apply direct pressure to the wound.

Signs and symptoms

- severe pain
- bruising and tenderness around the wound
- pallor
- external bleeding
- blood in the urine
- nausea, vomiting
- distension or swelling of the abdomen
- protrusion of intestines through an abdominal wound
- shock

What to do

Closed injury

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Check for signs of internal bleeding.
- 3 If abdominal pain continues, seek medical aid immediately.

Open injury

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3 Place the patient on their back with knees slightly raised and supported – a pillow may be used under the head to increase comfort.
- 4 Loosen any tight clothing.
- 5 Cover protruding organs with aluminium foil or plastic food wrap, or a large, nonstick, sterile dressing soaked in sterile saline or clean water if saline is not available.
- 6 Loosely secure the dressing with a broad bandage.



Nosebleed

What to do

- 1** Ask the patient to breathe through their mouth and not to blow their nose. Encourage the patient to spit out blood rather than swallow it.
- 2** Help the patient to sit down with their head slightly forward.
- 3** Pinch the soft part of the patient's nostrils, just below the bridge of the nose, for at least 10 minutes.
- 4** Loosen any tight clothing around the patient's neck.
- 5** If bleeding persists, seek medical aid.

Placing a cold pack on the patient's neck and forehead may help the bleed. A cold pack is unlikely to cause any harm.

Many nosebleeds do not have an obvious cause, but some may be because of:

- a blow to the nose
- excessive blowing
- sneezing
- high blood pressure
- changes to altitude.



Burn and scald

Warning

- DO NOT apply lotions, ointments, fat or ice to a burn.
- DO NOT touch the injured areas or burst any blisters.
- DO NOT remove anything sticking to the burn.
- Act with extreme urgency for a chemical or heat burn to the eye.

Signs and symptoms

Superficial burns

- red
- very painful
- blistered

Deep burns

- mottled red and white
- dark red or pale yellow
- painful
- blistered, with a moist surface if the blister has broken

Full thickness burns

- white or charred
- feels dry and leathery.
- pain is less because the nerves have been destroyed

What to do

If the patient's clothing is on fire

- 1 Stop the patient from moving around.
- 2 Drop the patient to the ground and cover or wrap them in a blanket or similar, if available.
- 3 Roll the patient along the ground until the flames are extinguished.
- 4 Manage the burn.

For all burns

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 If the burn is severe or if it involves the airway, **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance.
- 3 As soon as possible, hold the burnt area under cool running water for 20 minutes.
- 4 Remove any clothing and jewellery from the burnt area, unless they are stuck to the burn.
- 5 Cover the burn with a light, loose nonstick dressing, preferably clean, dry, non fluffy material (eg plastic cling film).
- 6 Continue to check the patient for shock, and treat if necessary.
- 7 If the burn is larger than a twenty cent piece or deep, seek medical aid.



Electric shock

What to do

- 1** Check for danger to yourself, bystanders and the patient.
- 2** Switch the power off, if possible, before trying to help the patient.
- 3** If the patient is in contact with high voltage lines, do not approach but wait until the power has been disconnected by authorised electrical personnel.
- 4** If power cannot be switched off quickly, remove the patient from the electrical supply without directly touching them –use a non conductive, dry material (eg dry wooden broom handle).
- 5** Follow DRSABCD.
- 6** Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 7** Treat for burns.

Warning

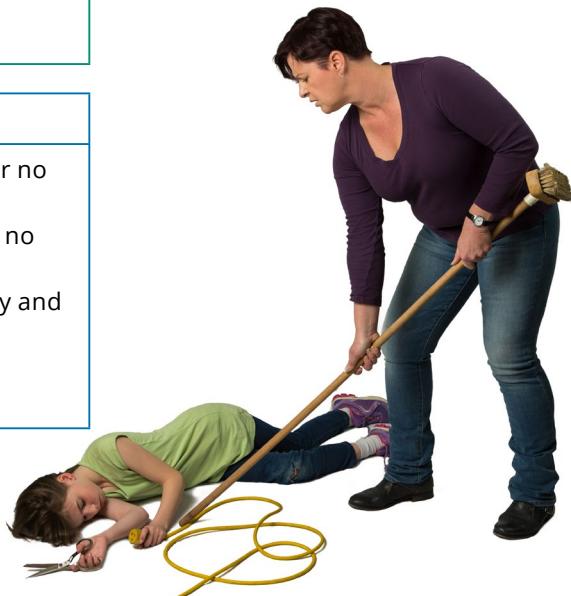
Even for a mild electric shock, encourage the patient to seek medical aid for assessment of potential effects on the heart.

Downed powerlines

- Remain at least 6 metres from cables.
- DO NOT attempt to remove cables.
- If a vehicle is being touched by a high voltage cable, DO NOT go near the vehicle or try to remove the patient from the vehicle.
- Advise the patient not to move.

Signs and symptoms

- difficulty in breathing or no breathing at all
- a weak, erratic pulse or no pulse at all
- burns, particularly entry and exit burns
- loss of consciousness
- sudden cardiac arrest



Broken bone (fracture)

Warning

- It can be difficult to tell whether an injury is a fracture, dislocation, sprain or strain. If in doubt, always treat as a fracture.
- DO NOT try to force a broken bone back into place.

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Ask the patient to remain as still as possible.
- 3 Control any bleeding, cover any wounds and check for other fractures.
- 4 Immobilise the broken bone by placing a padded splint along the injured limb.
- 5 Secure the splint by passing the bandages above and below the break to prevent movement. Tie the bandages firmly and away from the injured side.
- 6 For a leg fracture, also immobilise the foot and ankle. Support the limb while bandaging.
- 7 Check that the bandages are not too tight and watch for signs of loss of circulation to the limb every 15 minutes.
- 8 Seek medical aid.

Signs and symptoms

- pain or tenderness at or near the site of the injury
- swelling
- deformity
- discolouration, redness, bruising
- loss of function
- the patient felt or heard the break occur
- a coarse grating sound heard or felt as bones rub together



Dislocation

What to do

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** Rest and support the limb using soft padding and bandages.
- 3** For a shoulder injury, support the arm as comfortably as possible.
- 4** For a wrist injury, support the wrist in a sling.
- 5** Apply a cold pack directly over the injured joint, if possible.
- 6** Seek medical aid.
- 7** Check circulation of the limb. If circulation is absent, **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance. Massage the limb gently to try to restore circulation.



Warning

- It can be difficult to tell whether an injury is a fracture, dislocation, sprain or strain. If in doubt, always treat as a fracture.
- **DO NOT** attempt to put a dislocation back into place.

Signs and symptoms

- pain at or near the site of the injury
- difficulty in moving the joint
- inability to move the joint
- abnormal mobility of the limb
- loss of power
- deformity (such as an abnormal lump or depression)
- tenderness
- swelling
- discolouration and bruising

Sprain and strain

Warning

It can be difficult to tell whether an injury is a fracture, dislocation, sprain or strain. If in doubt, always treat as a fracture.

Signs and symptoms

Sprain

- intense pain
- restricted movement of the injured joint
- rapid development of swelling and bruising

Strain

- sharp, sudden pain in the region of the injury
- usually loss of power
- muscle tenderness

What to do

1 Follow DRSABCD.

2 Follow RICE:

- Rest – rest the patient and the injured part
 - Ice – apply an ice pack or cold pack for 15 minutes every 2 hours for 24 hours, then for 15 minutes every 4 hours for up to 24 hours
 - Compression – apply a compression bandage firmly to extend well beyond the injury
 - Elevation – elevate the injured part.
- 3 Avoid HARM:**
- Heat
 - Alcohol
 - Running or other exercise of the injured area
 - Massage.
- 4 Seek medical aid.**



Head injury

Signs and symptoms

- wounds to the scalp or to the face
- headache
- altered or abnormal responses to commands and touch
- loss of memory
- confusion
- nausea, vomiting
- faintness, dizziness
- confusion
- loss of consciousness

Concussion is a common head injury that results in temporary loss of normal brain function. It is characterised by an altered state of consciousness and is usually caused by a blow to the head.

The patient usually recovers quickly and spontaneously but there is always the chance of serious brain injury.

Any person who has suffered loss of consciousness or an altered state of consciousness after a blow to the head, should not return to their activity (e.g. sport) and should see a medical practitioner urgently.

Warning

- If the patient is unconscious as a result of a head injury, always suspect a spinal injury. Carefully support the patient's head and neck, and avoid twisting or bending during any movement. **Call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance.
- A patient with a head injury may vomit. Be ready to turn the patient into the recovery position, carefully supporting their head and neck and avoiding twisting or bending, and clear the airway quickly.



Head injury

What to do

Unconscious patient

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
If the patient is unconscious and a neck or spinal injury is suspected, place the patient in the recovery position, carefully supporting the patient's head and neck, and avoid twisting or bending during movement.
- 2** Ensure the patient's airway is clear and open. Keep the patient's airway open by lifting their chin. DO NOT force if the face is badly injured.
- 3** Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.

Conscious patient

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** If the patient is conscious and no spinal injury is suspected, place the patient in a position of comfort (usually lying down) with their head and shoulders slightly raised.
- 3** Control any bleeding with direct pressure at the point of bleeding. If you suspect the skull is fractured, use gentle pressure around the wound.
- 4** If blood or fluid comes from the ear, secure a sterile dressing lightly over the ear. Lie the patient on their injured side, if possible, to allow the fluid to drain.
- 5** Seek medical aid.



Spinal and neck injury

What to do

Unconscious breathing patient

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3 Place the patient in the recovery position. Carefully support their head and neck, and avoid twisting or bending during movement.
- 4 Ensure the patient's airway is clear and open.
- 5 Hold the patient's head and neck steady to prevent twisting or bending of the spine.

Conscious patient

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3 Keep the patient in the position found. Only move if in danger.
- 4 Reassure the patient. Ask them not to move.
- 5 Loosen any tight clothing.
- 6 Hold the head and neck steady to prevent twisting or bending of the spine.

Warning

- If the patient is unconscious as a result of a head injury, you should always suspect a spinal injury.
- DO NOT move a patient with a suspected spinal injury unless they are in danger. Movement may cause further injury.
- If the patient must be moved, take extreme care to keep the spine straight and avoid twisting or bending. Where the neck is involved, support the head and neck with your hands.
- DO NOT apply a cervical collar.

Signs and symptoms

- pain at or below the site of the injury
- tenderness over the site of the injury
- absent or altered sensation below the site of the injury, such as tingling in hands or feet
- loss of movement or impaired movement below the site of the injury



Also see 'Head injury' page 48

Poisoning

Poisons Information Centre – 13 11 26

Warnings

- DO NOT induce vomiting, unless advised to do so by the Poisons Information Centre – 13 11 26
- DO NOT give the patient anything to eat or drink.
- Wash substances off mouth and face with water.



What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3 Call fire services if air is contaminated with smoke or gas.
- 4 Reassure the patient.
- 5 Find out what sort of poison is involved, if possible, and record the information for medical personnel.
- 6 Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 and follow their advice.
- 7 If the patient is becoming drowsy, place them in the recovery position and continue to check their airway and breathing regularly.
- 8 Send any vomit and containers with the patient to hospital.

Signs and symptoms

Signs and symptoms depend on the type of poison and may include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ bite or injection marks, with or without local swelling ■ burns around and inside the mouth or on the tongue ■ smell of fumes ■ odours on the breath ■ burning pain from mouth to stomach ■ nausea, vomiting ■ abdominal pain | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ difficulty in breathing ■ tight feeling in chest ■ headache ■ ringing in ears ■ blurred vision ■ blue lips, face, earlobes, fingernails ■ drowsiness ■ loss of consciousness ■ seizures. |
|---|--|

Eye injuries

What to do

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** Wash your hands thoroughly and put disposable gloves on.
- 3** DO NOT try to remove an object that is embedded in or protruding from, the eye.
- 4** Cover the injured eye only with one or more sterile pads, avoiding any protruding object.
- 5** DO NOT put direct pressure on the eyeball.
- 6** Help the patient to lie down in a comfortable position on their back.
- 7** Ask the patient to try not to move their eyes.
- 8** Seek medical aid.



Warning

- Act with extreme urgency (within seconds) if it is a heat or chemical burn.
- DO NOT touch the eye or contact lens.
- DO NOT allow the patient to rub the eye.
- DO NOT try to remove any object that is embedded in or penetrating from the eye.
- DO NOT persist in examining the eye if the injury is severe.
- DO NOT apply pressure when bandaging the eye.

Signs and symptoms

- pain
- redness
- wateriness
- sensitivity to light
- swollen or spasming eyelids
- bleeding
- inability to open the eye
- injuries around the eye

Eye injuries

Warning

- Act with extreme urgency (within seconds) if it is a heat or chemical burn.
- DO NOT touch the eye or contact lens.
- DO NOT allow the patient to rub the eye.
- DO NOT try to remove any object that is embedded in or penetrating from the eye.
- DO NOT persist in examining the eye if the injury is severe.
- DO NOT apply pressure when bandaging the eye.

Signs and symptoms

- pain
- redness
- wateriness
- sensitivity to light
- swollen or spasming eyelids
- bleeding
- inability to open the eye
- injuries around the eye

What to do

Embedded object in the eye

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Cover the injured eye with an eye pad or clean dressing.
- 3 Seek medical aid.

Penetrating object from the eye

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3 Help the patient to lie down.
- 4 DO NOT try to remove the penetrating object.
- 5 Cover the injured eye by placing thick pads around or above and below the eye, or cover the injured eye with a paper cup.
- 6 Bandage the pads place, making sure there is no pressure on the eyelids.
- 7 Ask the patient to try not to move their eyes.
- 8 DO NOT give the patient anything to eat or drink.



Heat-induced illness*

Warning

- A heat-induced illness can quickly become life-threatening.
- If the patient does not improve quickly (within 10 minutes), send for an ambulance. Call Triple Zero (000).
- First aid for a heat-induced illness is cooling and rehydration.

Signs

The patient may be hot, sweaty and breathless. Or they may be hot and dry by the time they are seen.

Other gradual signs may include:

- not able to continue the activity—feeling hot, exhausted and weak
- high body temperature
- dizziness and faintness
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea
- pale skin and other signs of shock
- rapid weak pulse
- poor muscle control or weakness, or unsteady gait
- decreasing levels of consciousness, confusion, or seizures.

If the patient is not sweating, this is a sign of serious illness.

'Sport drinks'

Carbohydrate electrolyte fluids (any commercially available 'sport drink') can be an alternative to water for the management of exertion-related dehydration. As a guiding principle, oral rehydration should be guided by the patient's thirst.

However, if the patient is suffering heat-induced illness and are dehydrated, they may not feel thirsty.

* This first aid protocol replaces the first aid protocols for 'heat stroke' and 'heat exhaustion'.

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Lie the patient down in a cool or shaded area.
- 3 Strip the patient of as much clothing as possible.
- 4 If the patient does not improve quickly (within 10 minutes), call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 5 Soak the patient with any available water.
- 6 Fan the patient continuously.
- 7 Give cold water to the patient to drink if they are fully conscious and able to swallow.

If practicable, immersion in a bath of cold water is the most effective cooling means possible.

For the patient over 5 years

- 1 Immerse the patient (whole-body from the neck down) in a bath of cold water (preferably 1–7°) for 15 minutes.
- 2 Continuously observe the patient to ensure an open airway in case of any change in their level of consciousness.

If cold bath is not available, use a combination of the following as available:

- 1 Wet the patient with cool or cold water under a shower or with a hose or other source of running water.
- 2 Apply cold packs to the neck, groin, armpits, facial cheeks, palms of hands, soles of feet.
- 3 Repeatedly wet the skin with a wet cloth or spray bottle.
- 4 Fan continuously.

For the patient under 5 years

- 1 Place the patient in a bath of lukewarm water (if available) and sponge frequently.

If cold bath is not available, use a combination of the following as available:

- 1 Wet the patient with cool or cold water under a shower or with a hose or other source of running water.
- 2 Repeatedly wet the skin with a wet cloth or spray bottle.
- 3 Fan continuously.

Hypothermia

Warning

- DO NOT rub affected areas.
- DO NOT use radiant heat such as fire or electric heaters.
- DO NOT give alcohol.

Signs and symptoms

Mild

- feeling cold
- shivering
- clumsiness and slurred speech
- apathy
- irrational behaviour

Severe

- shivering ceases
- difficult to find pulse
- slow heart rate
- loss of consciousness

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Move the patient to a warm, dry place.
- 3 Help the patient to lie down in a comfortable position. Handle the patient as gently as possible, avoiding excess activity and movement.
- 4 Remove any wet clothing from the patient.
- 5 Place the patient between blankets or in a sleeping bag, and wrap them in an emergency blanket.
- 6 Cover the patient's head to maintain body heat.
- 7 Give the patient warm drinks if conscious and able to swallow. DO NOT give alcohol.
- 8 Place hot water bottles, heat packs and other sources of external heat directly on the patient's neck, armpits and groin. Be careful to avoid burns. Body-to-body contact may be used if other means of rewarming are not available.
- 9 If hypothermia is severe, call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 10 Stay with the patient until medical aid arrives.



Bites and stings

General warnings

- DRSABCD is the essential first step in the treatment for all venomous bites and stings.
- DO NOT try to catch the creature – it is not required for identification.
- DO NOT cut the bitten or stung area.
- DO NOT try to suck venom out of a wound.
- DO NOT use an arterial tourniquet.
- Any venomous bite or sting can cause a severe allergic reaction that may be life-threatening. Be prepared to give CPR and seek medical aid if anaphylactic symptoms develop.

General 'what to do'

- 1 Follow DRSABCD. Avoid being bitten or stung yourself.
- 2 Ask the patient where and when they were bitten or stung. If possible, mark the area on the skin with a pen, or photograph the site.
- 3 Carry out appropriate first aid quickly, according to signs and symptoms.
- 4 Seek medical aid if appropriate.
- 5 Continue to check the patient's breathing and pulse. Be prepared to give CPR if symptoms worsen.

Identifying the bite or sting

Often the patient cannot identify the creature because it was not seen, was too quick, too small or was unfamiliar. When the patient is not sure of what caused the bite or sting, you will need to manage the situation based on:

- the circumstances of the bite or sting (including geographic location and activity)
- signs and symptoms (including what the site of the bite or sting looks like, how the patient feels, and how fast any symptoms develop).

The exception is for a suspected snake bite. If you know or suspect that the patient has been bitten by a snake, manage as if the snake is venomous—use pressure bandaging and immobilisation, and call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.

Bites and stings

Signs and symptoms of a bite or sting from the marine or freshwater environment

If the patient shows:	suspect:	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ immediate or delayed pain at the bite site ■ swelling, bruising or local bleeding ■ bite marks; these may vary from obvious puncture wounds to scratches that may be almost invisible ■ swollen or tender lymph nodes 	sea snake	pressure bandaging and immobilising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ immediate intense pain ■ ladder-track tentacle marks ■ tentacles stuck to the skin ■ irregular heartbeat ■ cardiac arrest 	box jellyfish	vinegar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ very small or unnoticeable sting site ■ little or no immediate pain but within 5–40 minutes, dramatic signs and symptoms, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ severe muscle, back or abdominal pain ■ nausea and vomiting ■ profuse sweating ■ a distressing feeling of impending doom 	Irukandji jellyfish	vinegar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ pain at the sting site ■ red mark or tentacle mark ■ rash or blistering 	other jellyfish, including bluebottles or sea anemone	hot water

Bites and stings

Signs and symptoms of a bite or sting from the marine or freshwater environment

If the patient shows:	suspect:	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a bite site that may not be painful; a spot of blood on the skin may be the only sign ■ tingling around the mouth ■ mild muscle weakness ■ breathing difficulties ■ progressive paralysis 	blue-ringed octopus	pressure bandaging and immobilising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ pain at the sting site ■ breathing difficulties ■ progressive paralysis 	cone shell	pressure bandaging and immobilising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ immediate severe local pain ■ laceration or puncture ■ embedded sting or spine 	stingray or stinging fish	hot water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ local pain ■ laceration or puncture ■ embedded spine 	crown-of thorns, starfish or sea urchin	hot water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ laceration or puncture ■ redness and swelling ■ immediate severe pain 	platypus	hot water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ severe allergic reaction 	any venomous creature	see anaphylaxis, pp 26–27

Bites and stings

Signs and symptoms of a bite or sting from a land environment

If the patient shows:	suspect:	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ immediate or delayed pain at the bite site ■ swelling, bruising or local bleeding ■ bite marks; these may vary from obvious puncture wounds to scratches that may be almost invisible ■ swollen or tender lymph nodes 	snake	pressure bandaging and immobilising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ copious tears, salivation and sweating ■ muscular twitching ■ fast pulse 	funnel-web or mouse spider	pressure bandaging and immobilising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ intense local pain that may increase and spread ■ abdominal or chest pain ■ patchy sweating ■ continuing pain in the joints for days or weeks 	red-back spider	cold pack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ moderate to severe pain at the sting or bite site ■ swelling and redness 	other spiders	cold pack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ paralysis developing slowly over days ■ lack of balance and coordination ■ difficulty in breathing and swallowing 	paralysis tick	cold pack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ severe allergic reaction 	any venomous creature	see anaphylaxis, pp 26–27

Bites and stings

Box jellyfish, Irukandji, Morbakka, Jimble and other tropical jellyfish stings

VINEGAR

Vinegar inactivates the stinging cells of certain jellyfish and prevents further injection of venom.



What to do

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** Immediately flood the entire stung area with lots of vinegar for at least 30 seconds. DO NOT use fresh water.
- 3** If pain relief is required, apply a cold pack only after vinegar has been applied.
- 4** Urgently seek medical aid at a hospital if symptoms are severe.

Warning

- Signs and symptoms for some tropical water jellyfish stings may take up to 40 minutes or more to develop.
- Always consider the possibility of a jellyfish sting if a patient presents with severe pain either in the water or after emerging from the water.

Bites and stings

Bluebottle and nontropical jellyfish stings, stinging fish (eg stonefish, lionfish, bullrout) stings, stingray, crown-of-thorns starfish and sea urchin stings

HOT WATER

Hot water relieves the pain of many types of venomous marine and freshwater stings.

What to do

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** Check the water to ensure it is as hot (but not hotter) as you can comfortably tolerate before treating the patient.
- 3** Place the stung area in hot water (eg. help the patient under a hot shower, place a stung hand or foot in hot water, or pour hot water over the stung area) for 20 minutes.
- 4** Remove briefly before re-immersing.
- 5** Continue this cycle if pain persists.
- 6** Seek medical aid for a severe wound or if pain persists.

Warning

- DO NOT use on suspected box jellyfish or Irukandji stings.
- DO NOT remove embedded barbs or larger stings, but treat as an embedded object and seek medical aid.



Bites and stings

Red-back spider or other spider bites, bee, wasp or ant sting, tick bite, scorpion or centipede sting, other jellyfish sting

COLD PACK

A cold pack (a cool, wet cloth; a commercial ice pack; a plastic bag of ice wrapped in dry cloth; or a bag of frozen peas or similar) relieves pain and swelling.

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Apply a cold pack to the bitten or stung area for 15 minutes and reapply if pain continues.
- 3 The cold pack should be changed when necessary to maintain the same level of coldness.
- 4 Seek medical aid if pain worsens.



All snakes including sea snakes, Funnel-web and mouse spiders, blue-ringed octopus bite, and cone shell sting

PRESSURE BANDAGE AND IMMOBILISE

Applying pressure (bandaging) will compress the lymphatic vessels at the bite site. Movement of venom is prevented or slowed by keeping the patient immobilised and splinting (immobilising) the bitten or stung limb. This restricts the pumping effect of muscle movement and will slow or stop the movement of lymph carrying venom in the vessels.

What to do

- 1** Follow DRSABCD.
- 2** Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3** Lie the patient down and ask them to keep still.
- 4** Reassure the patient.
- 5** If on a limb, apply an elasticised roller bandage (10–15 centimetres wide) over the bite site as soon as possible.
- 6** Then apply a further elasticised roller bandage (10–15 centimetres wide), starting just above the fingers or toes and moving upwards on the bitten limb as far as can be reached.
 - Use clothing or other material if an elasticised roller bandage is not available.
 - Apply the bandage as firmly as possible to the limb. You should be unable to easily slide a finger between the bandage and the skin.
- 7** Immobilise the bandaged limb using splints.
- 8** Keep the patient lying down and completely still (immobilised).
- 9** Write down the time of the bite and when the bandage was applied. If possible, mark the location of the bite site (if known) on the bandage, or photograph the site.
- 10** Stay with the patient until medical aid arrives.



Basic life support

Basic life support aims to keep a patient alive by establishing and maintaining their airway, breathing and circulation.

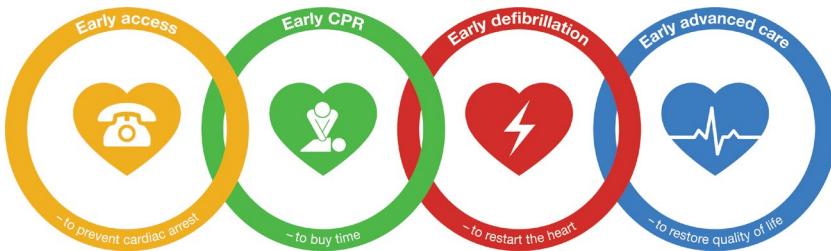
Maintaining an airway may involve having to clear a blockage, such as the tongue or vomit, from the airway. To maintain breathing and circulation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is given.

Many situations requiring CPR are due to a disturbance of the electrical activity of the heart's muscles (fibrillation). Using an automated external defibrillator (AED) may restore normal heart rhythm.

These simple techniques will either restart normal heart action or maintain brain function until specialised assessment and medical treatment are available.

Chain of survival

Immediate action needs to be taken to maximise a patient's chances of survival, particularly when the patient is not breathing normally or responding. The Chain of survival is the key to improving the patient's chances of survival.



There are four steps in the Chain.

- 1 Early access:** An ambulance must be called immediately to ensure that defibrillation and advanced life support can be started without delay.
- 2 Early CPR:** If CPR is started within 4 minutes of the heart stopping, the vital organs (such as the brain) stay oxygenated.
- 3 Early defibrillation:** If CPR is given within 4 minutes and defibrillation within 8–12 minutes, the chance of survival significantly improves.
- 4 Early advanced life support:** Advanced treatment by the ambulance service, such as giving medication and stabilising the airway, may increase chances of survival even further.

Legal considerations

Workplace first aiders (including those in education and care settings) should be aware of the relevant first aid regulations, legislations, Codes of Practice or government guidelines specific to their State or Territory (see [Resources, page 84–87](#)).

SafeWork Australia's model *Code of Practice: First Aid in the Workplace* gives details of work health and safety duties as well as practical information about first aid requirements, equipment, facilities and training relevant to your workplace, and state and territory.

Duty of care

When you have made the decision to give first aid and have started first aid treatment on a patient, you have committed yourself to providing care to that patient.

This duty of care means that you stay and provide first aid treatment to the patient to the best of your ability and to your level of training.

This duty of care continues until:

- you can hand over care to another or more experienced first aider
- you can hand over care to a health professional
- you are physically unable to continue to provide care
- the situation becomes unsafe to continue to provide care.

Consent

Generally, mentally competent adults have the right to refuse any treatment, even if that treatment is necessary to save their lives. Treatment given to a person without consent may constitute assault. Before you provide any first aid to a patient, you must first gain the patient's consent to begin the treatment.

If the patient is a child, the parent or guardian should be asked for permission, but if the parent or guardian is not present and the injury or illness is life-threatening, immediate first aid should be given.

Consent can be implied or expressed. The patient implies consent if they go to the first aid room and cooperate with the first aid officer. The patient expresses consent when they give spoken or written permission to the first aider or medical personnel.

In some situations, a person cannot give consent to treatment. For example, if the patient is unconscious, if the injury or illness has affected their ability to make an informed choice, or if the patient is very young or is intellectually disabled. If the patient cannot give consent to treatment, the first aider can presume that the patient would have given the consent if they were able. Thus, the first aider can administer any necessary treatment to save the person's life, or to prevent serious illness or further injury.

Legal considerations

Privacy and confidentiality

Information about the incident and patient should be kept confidential and only shared with medical personnel.

The privacy of the patient should always be respected as much as possible. The person controlling the records has a responsibility to ensure they are only released to people with appropriate authority, and all records must be stored in a secure location. The patient should be informed if access has been given. A record should be kept of anyone who has had access to particular documents, and when and why.

Legislation varies about who can have access to first aid records, the extent of this access, and what incidents have to be reported. However, the following people have the right to access:

- paramedics or a treating doctor
- people investigating a workplace illness or injury (eg the police, coroner, workplace inspection authority, the courts)
- an employer (eg to make sure that the injury was work related, or to help to identify the cause of the incident).

Liability

You should not allow the thought of liability to stop you from providing life-saving first aid.

First aiders are only liable for any injury caused by them if negligence can be shown. The person suing must be able to show, among other things, a lack of duty of care, treatment beyond the first aider's ability and training, and that the treatment was not reasonable in the circumstances.

Documentation

In a workplace environment, it is a requirement that you fully document all incidents involving first aid.

Maintaining good, accurate records is necessary:

- for proper clinical management
- because the law requires such records
- to protect the first aider against possible litigation and prosecution
- to protect individuals and organisations if there is any disagreement or controversy
- to provide information to allow researchers to evaluate injury and illness trends.

Legal considerations

Documents should:

- be accurate and legible
- written at the time of treatment—in ink and never erased
- contain facts as stated by the patient—not record opinions or hearsay
- be validated and signed by the patient if possible
- be given to the appropriate people
- be kept strictly confidential and stored in a locked cupboard, or electronically at a secure location
- be kept for 7 years (for adult patients) from the date of completion, or until the patient is 25-years-old if the patient is under 18.

The first aider

The first aider is the person who provides the initial care to a person suffering an injury or illness. They may have attended an accredited first aid training course, or they may be a lay person passing by, who is able to help.

The trained first aider will:

- recognise, assess, and prioritise the need for first aid
- provide care by using appropriate skills and knowledge, and within their level of training
- recognise their own limitations, and seek additional help when needed.

Roles and responsibilities

The first aider who arrives first at the scene of an incident takes charge and stays in charge until handing over control to a health professional.

The first aider:

- assesses the situation
- identifies the nature of the injury or illness, as far as possible
- arranges for emergency services to attend if required
- manages the patient promptly and appropriately
- stays with the patient until it is possible to hand over to a health care professional, if necessary
- gives further help if necessary.

Any other first aider who arrives should offer to help the original first aider, without trying to take control. If you feel another first aider at the scene is more qualified to handle the situation, ask that person to take control. However, the most qualified person does not need to be in control, especially if another first aider already has matters well organised.

Effective first aid

The first aider needs the knowledge and skills to enable them to provide emergency treatment and management. You also need attitudes and behaviours that will help you to work well with patients.

Providing first aid can sometimes be personally challenging. The nature of the injury or illness, unpleasant smells, or the sight of blood, vomit or torn skin may be distressing. This is natural; even medical personnel sometimes experience these challenges.

You may also be nervous about using your first aid skills, particularly if this is the first incident you have attended. You may question whether you are doing the right thing.

The first aider

Presenting a calm and confident manner to a patient will help reassure and comfort them. This, in turn, can help you to carry out first aid effectively.

What to do

In an emergency situation, if you feel overwhelmed and panicky:

- pause and look away from the injuries
- take a few long, slow, deep breaths
- remind yourself of your first aid priorities.

Be respectful

A patient needing first aid may feel vulnerable and may react in an unpredictable way. As a first aider, you need to treat each patient with respect, regardless of their injury or illness.

The patient may be acting strangely or be uncooperative because of the injury or illness, stress, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

A patient may feel uncertain about being touched by a stranger who is of a different age, race or gender.

Acting calmly, confidently and respectfully can help to reassure the patient and allow you to provide the help they need.

What to do

When treating a patient:

- introduce yourself to the conscious patient
- ask for the patient's name and use it
- if possible, place yourself at the same level of the patient and use eye contact
- be aware of age, gender and cultural differences and show sensitivity with language, tone and touch
- ask for the patient's consent before you provide first aid
- always explain to the patient what you are about to do, are doing and why
- ask the patient for their account of the incident (what happened, how, why and when)
- do not voice judgments about the incident, the injury or illness
- comfort and reassure the patient at all times (be aware of your body language and tone)
- ask the patient to assist you in their treatment, if they are able, to help them to focus elsewhere.

What is first aid?

First aid is the helping behaviours and initial care provided for an illness or injury.

The goals of first aid are to preserve life, alleviate suffering, prevent further illness or injury, and promote recovery.

First aid can be initiated by anyone in any situation. First aid can be needed in a wide range of situations, from minor injuries to life-threatening conditions.

These can be the result of accidents in the home, workplace or outdoors. They can also be the result of a medical emergency. People live with conditions such as asthma, diabetes and epilepsy without a noticeable effect on their lifestyles. However, a medical emergency may arise from these conditions.

The cause of an incident is not always obvious. In such cases, you use the DRSABCD Action Plan and appropriate care.

The aims of first aid are to:

- keep patients alive
- prevent any injury or illness from becoming worse
- help promote recovery
- provide comfort to people who are injured or ill
- make sure the environment is safe for the first aider, other people and the patient.

In cases of minor injury or illness, first aid may be the only treatment that a patient requires (e.g. a cold pack for a muscle strain).

In more serious cases, additional medical aid will be needed (e.g. surgery to reset a broken bone).

First actions

In providing first aid, your first priority is to keep the patient alive. Therefore, your first checks and actions concern any emergency aid that might be needed – use the DRSABCD Action Plan.

You can then progress to assess the patient more fully by:

- managing any life-threatening injuries (e.g. severe bleeding)
- collecting a history from the patient, if they are conscious
- conducting a secondary assessment of the patient's condition
- observing the patient.

First aid

Triage

In an accident or emergency, you may have a number of patients who need treatment. You will need to decide which patients you are going to treat first.

Priority for treatment is usually given to patients with life-threatening injuries or illnesses. In a first aid situation, there are two main triage principles:

- 1 Life comes before limb. As a general rule, airway management has the highest priority. A patient who is not breathing normally has priority over a patient who is bleeding.
- 2 Acute needs come before long-term outcomes. A patient with internal abdominal bleeding has a higher priority for evacuation than a patient with a fractured spine.

Patient history

If the patient is conscious, you can talk to them to gather information about the incident and their condition.

When you are taking a history from a patient, the aim is to find out anything that may be important about the patient and the incident. Use SAMPLE to remember the details you need to collect.

If the patient is not conscious, you can also check for anything that could relate to the current injury or illness. Patients may have items with them that give vital clues about the emergency, such as a medical alert bracelet, asthma puffer, an adrenaline auto-injector. You can also try to get relevant information from bystanders, friends or family who are present.

SAMPLE

Signs and symptoms	If possible, ask the patient how they feel (e.g. pain, nausea), and note what signs of injury or illness you can see.
Allergies	Ask the patient if they have any allergies.
Medication	Ask the patient if they have taken any medication in the past 24 hours; if they take regular medication; if they are carrying it.
Past medical history	Ask the patient about their current health conditions, any injuries or illnesses.
Last meal	Ask the patient when they last had something to eat or drink.
Events	Ask the patient how the incident happened.

Vital signs

As a first aider it is important to monitor a patient's vital signs. That is, regularly check the patient's pulse, breathing, temperature, responses, and colour.

Normal clinical values	Infant (0–1 yr)	Child (1–17 yrs)	Adult (18+ yrs)
Average pulse rate per minute (beats per minute)	100–160	70–110	60–100
Average breathing rate per minute (breaths per minute)	30–50	20–30	10–20
Normal temperature range (degrees Celsius)	35.5–37.4°C		

Differences between infants, children and adults

When involved in the same kind of accident as adults, infants and children may suffer quite different injuries because of their different size, anatomy and physiology. These differences will have an impact on the assessment and management of an infant's or child's injury or illness. However, the basic principles of first aid care — airway, breathing and circulation — remain the same, regardless of the age of the patient.

Differences include:

- An infant's airway is smaller, so there is a greater risk of airway obstruction from small objects, such as a first tooth.
- Slight swelling of an infant's airway means a greater reduction in airway diameter, and thus the flow of air.
- Infants and young children have a larger tongue and smaller oral cavity, so the tongue is more likely to obstruct the airway than in an adult.
- The back of an infant's head is bigger than on an adult. Thus, the head moves forward when an infant is placed flat on a flat surface. In CPR, a slight and careful chin lift may be necessary to get a neutral position.
- Infants 4–6-months-of-age breath exclusively through their nose. It is important to check that the nose is clear.
- The trachea (windpipe) is shorter, and softer making collapse and obstruction of the airway more possible. An infant or child needs to be positioned correctly for CPR.
- The chest wall in an infant and young child is more elastic and compliant than an adults, hence using two finger for chest compressions.
- Bones, cartilage and muscle protecting organs are not as developed as adults.

First aid

General management of a patient

The general management of patients is the same, whatever the cause. The patient needs to:

- be protected from danger
- be in the recovery position if unconscious and breathing normally
- have a clear airway
- have their injuries treated, such as bleeding, burns or wounds
- receive appropriate medical aid — call triple zero (000) for an ambulance
- be monitored until an ambulance arrives.

What to do

If the patient is unconscious and not breathing normally

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.

The patient is breathing normally

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Place the unconscious breathing patient in the recovery position, carefully supporting the head and neck.
- 3 Ask the conscious patient what happened.
- 4 Manage life-threatening injuries, such as severe external bleeding, and send for medical aid. If possible, do not leave an unconscious patient alone.
- 5 Manage other injuries such as minor wounds.
- 6 Conduct a secondary observation, carrying out a head-to-toe examination.
- 7 Check the patient for identification, medication or a medical alert device (e.g. bracelet or necklace).
- 8 Ask bystanders what happened and record all observations.
- 9 Continue to check the patient's response and breathing.
- 10 Provide information to medical personnel when they arrive.

Secondary assessment

After you have follow DRSABCD and you are confident that the patient's condition is not life-threatening, do a secondary assessment of the patient.

This involves a head-to-toe examination to determine what injuries are present, and prioritise the first aid treatment required according to the severity of injuries.

Assess the patient by starting at the head, working down to the feet and toes, and asking the patient if they feel pain. You will be looking for bleeding and other injuries, noting tenderness, swelling, wounds or deformity.

What to do	
1 Examine the head.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Check for blood, bruising and swelling.
2 Check the face.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Check the eyes: compare the size of the pupils; look for bruising, cuts and swelling.■ Compare one side of the face to the other to check for swelling or other abnormalities.
3 Check the neck.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Check for injuries: bruising, cuts.■ Check the collarbones: breakages, bruising.
4 Check the shoulders, arms and hands for wounds, bleeding and fractures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Check shoulder joints and shoulder blades.■ Check the full length of each arm.■ Check both hands and each finger for bruising, swelling, cuts, breaks and feeling.
5 Check the chest for injuries, bruising, cuts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Does the chest expand easily and evenly?■ Does breathing cause pain?
6 Check the abdomen for injuries, bruising, cuts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Is it tender? Does a gentle press on the abdomen cause pain?
7 Check the pelvis and buttocks for injuries, bruising, cuts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Push the tops of the hips towards each other. Does this cause pain?■ Check for evidence of wet pants or blood from the genital area.
8 Check the legs, ankles and feet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Check the full length of each leg for bruising, swelling, cuts, breaks or abnormal alignment.■ Check both feet and each toe for bruising, swelling, cuts, breaks and feeling.

Managing an accident scene

In an emergency, your first aid skills and knowledge may be crucial in managing the incident.

If you are the only first aider at the scene, you can ensure that:

- priorities for patient treatment are appropriately assessed
- patients are protected from further injury
- other first aiders and bystanders are protected from injury
- emergency services can gain access to the site.

Safety at the scene

An emergency scene must be made safe for everyone — yourself, bystanders and the patient.

You will need to determine if:

- there is any continuing danger (e.g. traffic, fire, fumes, spilt fuel or chemicals, fallen or damaged power lines, unstable structures)
- anyone's life is in immediate danger (e.g. from a fire or flammable materials).

Leave dangerous situations for emergency personnel to deal with, because they have the training and equipment to do so. However, after assessing the situation, you may decide to move the patient or to take steps to minimise the danger, if possible.

Bystanders

Always look for bystanders who can help in some way. A bystander may be able to:

- help make the scene safe and secure
- call triple zero (000) for the emergency service(s) required for the incident and if necessary, local authorities (e.g. to have power turned off)
- find a first aid kit or alternative materials
- help to give first aid under your direction
- gather information from the patient, other bystanders and anyone else who can help
- help protect the privacy of the patient
- gather and protect the patient's belongings
- reassure the patient's relatives and friends
- provide necessary information to medical personnel
- control a crowd
- warn traffic to slow down or stop.

Managing an accident scene

Handover to medical aid

Medical aid is the treatment by a health care professional, who may be a doctor, registered nurse or paramedic.

Medical aid takes over from first aid when the health care professional arrives at the scene, or when you deliver the patient to a clinic or hospital. The first aider may be required to remain and provide reasonable assistance if asked to do so by the health care professional.

The health care professional may ask you for information about the incident and patient. When handing over care to medical aid, ensure that the information you give is factual, concise, relevant and clear.

- The handover should cover:
- what happened
- how long ago it happened
- what first aid was given
- the current condition of the patient
- any improvement or deterioration of the patient whilst in the first aider's care
- the patient's personal details (if collected and consent given by the patient to share this information).

After an incident – debrief

Providing care in an emergency situation can be very stressful for the first aider.

After the first aider has handed a patient over to medical care, a post-incident 'debrief' is useful to bring the incident to a close, by:

- giving an opportunity to discuss any emotions and thoughts you might have about the incident
- providing support
- providing information to prevent a similar incident from occurring
- identifying any issues with the emergency action plan
- confirming the effectiveness of the first aid given.

This debrief can be conducted by a doctor or other health professional, a staff or human resources manager if the incident happened at work, or other appropriate person.

Preventing infection

Protect yourself and your patient from infection.

- Tiny airborne droplets containing bacteria or viruses from an infected person who has sneezed or coughed out, can be breathed in.
- Objects can be contaminated with bacteria or viruses, and transferred to your body by touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Bacteria or viruses can enter an open wound or broken skin from the air or from a contaminated object that touches the wound.

Signs and symptoms of infection

The signs and symptoms of an infected wound may include:

- increased pain and soreness
- increased temperature (warmth) around the wound area
- increased swelling and redness of the wound and surrounding area
- pus oozing from the wound
- fever (if the infection persists)
- swelling and tenderness of the lymph glands
- tracking or red streaks leading away from the wound.

To prevent infection

Carry standard protective equipment

- a pocket mask or face shield (for mouth-to-mouth contact)
- disposable latex gloves
- alcohol gel to clean your hands.

Take standard precautions

- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly before and after giving first aid, even if you will be wearing gloves.
- Always wear clean disposable gloves, whether or not you are likely to be exposed to blood or other body fluids.
- Avoid coughing, sneezing or talking while managing a wound.

Use sterile or clean dressings.

- Handle and dispose of sharps (needles) and waste (bloody gauze, pads or bandages) appropriately.
- If the patient has any signs or symptoms of infection, advise them to seek medical aid.
- If you do come into contact with a patient's body fluids, seek medical advice as soon as possible.

Preventing infection

During first aid, the first aider and the patient are at risk of infection. Taking standards precautions can protect the first aider and the patient from infection. These precautions aim to prevent the transmission of blood and other body fluids (saliva, vomit, pus, urine, faeces), and to keep wounds and surfaces clean.

If contamination occurs

What to do	
Skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If there has been a needle stick injury or if broken skin has been touched by blood, wash the area well with soap and water. ■ If water is not available, clean the area with hand wipes, alcohol-based liquid or gel if available.
Eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If eyes have been splashed with blood or other body fluids, flush the eyes gently but thoroughly with lots of running water or saline for at least 5 minutes. The eyes must be kept open during this process. ■ Do not use disinfectants in the eyes.
Mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If blood has got into the mouth, spit out any contaminated fluid and rinse the mouth thoroughly with water several times. ■ Seek medical advice as soon as possible — within hours of such exposure. ■ The contaminated item or sample of contaminated blood should be kept for testing, if possible.

Lifting and moving a patient

Warning

- Unless absolutely necessary, do not move a patient until medical aid arrives. Moving a patient can cause further injury or make existing injuries worse.
- Whenever possible, try to give first aid *where* the patient is found.
- Only move the patient if there is immediate danger. Move the patient if they have a life-threatening condition and you cannot provide first aid where they are.

What to do

Before moving the patient, consider:

- whether you can handle the size and weight of the person without injury to yourself
- what other help is available
- the type and seriousness of injuries
- the type of ground to be crossed (is it rough, steep, etc)
- the distance the patient has to be moved.

Correct lifting technique

When lifting, remember to:

- bend at the knees
- keep your back straight and head up
- keep in a balanced position
- keep your centre of gravity low
- hold the weight close to your body for stability
- take small steps
- work as a team – someone must take the role of leader.

Safety and prevention

First aid should not just be about responding to injury or illness. It should also include preventing such injuries or illnesses by making your environment safe and by minimising risk.

It is useful to think about the risks you may encounter in various environments – such as the home, workplace, outdoors and remote areas – and how to minimise these risks.

It is also useful to think about particular emergencies (e.g. fire, floods or natural disasters) and how you can prepare for them.

The basics

- Have at least one trained first aider in the home, workplace or community group.
- Attend first aid practical training courses. CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) skills should be refreshed annually, and first aid qualifications renewed every three years.
- Keep a complete first aid kit and ensure that everybody knows where it is.
- Have emergency telephone numbers handy. Teach children how to call triple zero (000) and how to ask for help.
- If you have a health condition that might put you at risk (e.g. diabetes, anaphylaxis, etc), ensure that you have an appropriate action plan and carry a medical alert device (eg bracelet). It is also a good idea to tell family, friends or coworkers about your condition, so that they can help you in a first aid emergency.

First aid kits

A first aid kit is a necessity for every first aider. A kit can be useful in the home, and workplaces will have specific requirements for their first aid kits and equipment.

Knowing what each item is used for and how it is used is very important. The way in which you use these materials will vary with the type and location of the injury.

What to do

- Regularly check your first aid kit
- Ensure all contents are clean.
- Packets of pads, bandages, etc are properly sealed.
- Expiry dates have not been exceeded.
- Used items have been replaced.
- Store in a quickly and easily accessible place, but out of reach of young children.

Kit items and their use

Dressings and bandages are the main items used by the first aider. Different types of dressings and bandages are used, in varying ways, depending on the type and severity of the injury.

- Wound dressings control bleeding and protect wounds.
- Bandages can be used as dressings or slings, to bind pads in place, or to apply pressure.
- Pads are used to place over injuries.
- Gauze swabs are used to clean patients' wounds and surrounding areas.
- Alcohol wipes or gels are used to clean your hands.

Other items that may be in your kit include:

- disposable gloves to help to prevent infection
- adhesive tape to secure dressings
- scissors to cut dressings and bandages
- blunt-nosed shears to cut away clothing
- saline to wash eyes and clean wounds
- cold packs to relieve pain

First aid kits

- plastic bags to make cold compresses, carry water, seal an open chest wound or store dressings
 - splinter probes or tweezers to remove splinters
 - thermal blanket to protect against cold and weather, and to prevent loss of body heat
 - note pad and pencil for recording times, and details of illness and injury
 - disposable hand towels for general cleaning (not wound cleaning).



Resources

The following resources provide links to relevant regulations, legislations, Codes of Practice or government guidelines relevant to first aid (including asthma and anaphylaxis) in education and care settings and other workplaces.

National

- The **Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy** (ASCIA) provides a list of state and territory specific guidelines and training options for anaphylaxis management.
<https://www.allergy.org.au/hp/anaphylaxis/anaphylaxis-guidelines-for-schools-and-childrens-services>
- **Asthma Australia** has developed a single national set of guidelines to ensure currency and consistency in asthma management in schools across the country.
<https://asthma.org.au/what-we-do/asthma-in-schools/asthma-guidelines-for-schools/>
- **The National Asthma Council Australia** is the national authority for asthma knowledge, and provides useful information for understanding and living with asthma.
<https://www.nationalasthma.org.au/>
- For kindergarten programs or outside school hours care, run by schools or external providers, the **Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority** provides a Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Feb. 2017).
<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-01/NQF-Resource-02-Guide-to-ECS-Law-Regs.pdf>

Australian Capital Territory

- **ACT Work Health and Safety First Aid in the Workplace Code of Practice** specifies recommended first aid equipment and training for all workplaces.
<https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2020-543/>
- **Anaphylaxis Management Procedure**, ACT Department of Education
https://www.education.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policies
- **Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011**
<https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/sl/2011-36/current/pdf/2011-36.pdf>

New South Wales

- **Anaphylaxis procedures for schools** includes requirements for risk management, action steps, communication strategies.
<https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/health-and-physical-care/health-care-procedures/conditions/anaphylaxis/anaphylaxis-procedures-for-schools2>
- **Asthma health care procedures** Parents must complete a written request (form) for students to carry their own asthma reliever medication. That form is available here:
<https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/health-and-physical-care/health-care-procedures/conditions/asthma>
- **SafeWork NSW Code of Practice First Aid in the Workplace** specifies recommended first aid equipment and training for all workplaces.
http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/52152/First-aid-in-the-workplace-Code-of-practice-July-2015.pdf
- **Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011**
<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/pdf/asmade/sl-2017-404>

Northern Territory

- **Anaphylaxis Management in Schools Guidelines** specifies requirements for staff training and risk management.
<https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-of-students/anaphylaxis>
- **Asthma Management in Schools Guidelines** provides the recommended numbers of asthma emergency kits to be in schools depending on numbers of employees and students.
<https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-of-students/asthma>
- **Worksafe NT First Aid in the Workplace Code of Practice** specifies recommended first aid equipment and training for all workplaces.
<https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/forms-and-resources/codes-of-practice/first-aid-in-the-workplace>
- **Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011**
<https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-REGULATIONS-2011>

Resources

Queensland

- **Anaphylaxis guidelines for Queensland state schools** provides requirements for risk management, emergency treatment procedures, roles and responsibilities.
<https://education.qld.gov.au/student/Documents/anaphylaxis-guidelines-for-queensland-state-schools.pdf>
- **Asthma guidelines for Queensland schools provides** requirements for risk management, emergency treatment procedures, roles and responsibilities.
<http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/education/management/Procedure%20Attachments/Supporting-students-with-asthma-and-or-at-risk-of-anaphylaxis-at-school/Supporting-students-with-asthma-and-or-at-risk-of-anaphylaxis-at-school.pdf>
- **Queensland First Aid in the Workplace Code of Practice** specifies the recommended first aid equipment and training for all workplaces.
https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/58162/First-aid-in-the-workplace-COP-2014.pdf
- **Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011**
<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/sl-2011-0240>

South Australia

- **Anaphylaxis and severe allergies in education and care procedure** includes specific information related to asthma and anaphylaxis.
<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/doc/anaphylaxis-and-severe-allergies-education-and-care-procedure>
- **Safework SA First Aid in the Workplace Code of Practice** specifies recommended first aid equipment and training for all workplaces.
https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/136264/First-aid-in-the-workplace.pdf
- **Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012**
<https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/R/WORK%20HEALTH%20AND%20SAFETY%20REGULATIONS%202012.aspx>

Tasmania

- **Tasmania Department of Education Specific Health Issues: Procedures, Information and Contacts** includes specific information related to asthma and anaphylaxis.
<https://documentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/Documents/Specific-Health-Issues-Procedures.pdf>
- **Worksafe Tasmania First Aid in the Workplace Code of Practice** specifies recommended first aid equipment and training for all workplaces.
<https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice/cop-folder/first-aid-in-the-workplace#:~:text=The%20code%20of%20practice%20for,applies%20to%20all%20workplaces>
- **Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012**
<https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sr-2012-122>

Victoria

- **Ministerial Order No.706: Anaphylaxis management in Victorian schools**
https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/health/Anaphylaxis_MinisterialOrder706.pdf
- **Victorian Education Department asthma policy** specifies requirements in relation to plans all schools must have in place and staff training.
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/health/Pages/conditionasthma.aspx>
- **Worksafe Victoria First Aid in the Workplace – Compliance Code** covers first aid arrangements including first aid needs assessment, first aid training, first aid kits and first aid facilities.
<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/pages/forms-and-publications/forms-and-publications/first-aid-in-the-workplace-compliance-code>
- **Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017**
<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/occupational-health-and-safety-regulations-2017/005>

Western Australia

- **WorkSafe Codes of Practice: first aid facilities and services, workplace amenities and facilities, personal protective clothing and equipment** specifies recommended first aid equipment and training for all workplaces.
https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/atoms/files/code_first_aid_0.pdf
- **Anaphylaxis management guidelines for schools**
<http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/guidelines/anaphylaxis-management-guidelines-for-schools.en?cat-id=3457999>
- **Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 1996**
https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main_mrttitle_1853_homepage.html

Index

- abdominal injury 41
- abrasions 37
- advanced life support 65
- airway (DRSABCD) 5–6
 - basic life support 65
 - differences between infants, children and adults 73
- allergic reaction
 - bites and stings 57–64 mild
 - to moderate 26 severe
 - (anaphylaxis) 26–27
- amputation 40
- anaphylaxis
 - allergic reaction 26
 - bites and stings 57–64
 - Epipen® 27
 - severe allergic reaction 26–27
 - safety and prevention 81
- anatomy 73
- angina 21
 - heart attack 22–23
- arterial tourniquet 34
- asthma emergency 28
 - medical emergency 25
- basic life support 65
 - DRSABCD action plan 1–17 chain of survival 65
- bites and stings 57–63
 - allergic reaction 26
 - anaphylaxis 26–27
 - cold pack, pain relief 60, 61, 63
 - cold pack, treatment 63
 - general warnings, 'what to do' 57
 - identifying the bite or sting 57
 - land environment 60
 - marine or freshwater environment 58–59
 - hot water 62
 - pressure bandage and immobilise 63
 - vinegar 60
- bleeding
 - arterial tourniquets 34
 - assessment 74–75
 - bites and stings 58
 - broken bone 45
 - DRSABCD 1, 3
 - eye injuries 52–53
 - head injury 49
 - internal 36
 - nosebleed 42
 - shock 33
 - severe, external 34–35
 - triage 72
 - wounds 37–39
- breathing (DRSABCD) 7
- broken bone (fracture) 45
- burn (and scald) 43
 - clothing on fire 43
 - electric shock 44
 - poisoning 51
- cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) (DRSABCD) 9–14
 - Chain of survival 65
 - changing the person doing CPR 9
 - drowning patient 14
 - patient in a wheelchair 14
 - pregnant patient 14
 - when to stop CPR 9
- Chain of survival 65
- choking 18–19
- clothing on fire 43
- cold pack
 - bites and stings 60, 61, 63
 - dislocation 46
 - heat-induced illness 55
 - nosebleed 42
 - sprain and strain 47
- concussion 48
- convulsion, febrile 32
- cut (or incision) 37
 - secondary assessment 75

Index

- danger (DRSABCD) 1, 2
 lifting and moving 80
 managing an accident scene 76
 safety and prevention 81
 defibrillate/defibrillation
 (DRSABCD) 15–17
 basic life support 65
 sudden cardiac arrest 20
 diabetes 29
 epileptic seizure 30
 high blood sugar
 (hyperglycaemia) 29
 low blood sugar
 (hypoglycaemia) 29
 medical emergency 25
 dislocation 46
 broken bone (fracture) 45
 shoulder 46
 wrist 46
 DRSABCD action plan 2–17
[infographic iv-1]
 electric shock (injury) 44
 electric shock (treatment)
 basic life support 65
 defibrillation 15–17
 sudden cardiac arrest 20
 embedded wound 38
 bites and stings 59, 62
 eye injuries 52–53
 puncture 38
 severe, external bleeding 35
 epilepsy, medical emergency 25
 epileptic seizure 30
 eye injuries 52–53
 chemical or heat burn 52
 embedded 53
 penetrating 53
 splash contamination 79
 fainting 31
 FAST, stroke 24
 febrile convulsion 32
 fever 32, 78
 first aid 71–75
 definition 71
 differences between infants,
 children and adults 73
 first actions 71
 general management 74
 patient history 72
 SAMPLE 72
 secondary assessment 74
 triage 72
 vital signs 73
 workplace 66
 first aider 69–70
 debrief 77
 definition 69
 effective first aid 69
 handover 77
 managing an accident scene
 76–77
 infection prevention 78–79
 respect 70
 roles and responsibilities 69
 fracture 45
 freshwater (bites and stings)
 58–59
 hot water 62
 vinegar 61
 handling an emergency iv-1
 HARM (sprains and strains) 47
 head, infant CPR 13, 73
 head injury 48–49
 concussion 48
 head-to-toe examination 74–75
 heart attack 22–23
 angina 21
 heat
 burn 43
 eye injuries 52–53
 heat-induced illness (heat stroke,
 heat exhaustion) 54–55
 high blood sugar 29

- hot water (bites and stings) 61
- hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar) 29
- hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) 29
- hypothermia 56
- infection
 - preventing 78–79
 - wound 37
- kits, first aid 82–83
- laceration 37
 - bites and stings 59
- legal 66–68
 - consent 66
 - documentation 67–68
 - duty of care 66
 - liability 68
 - privacy and confidentiality 67
 - workplace 66
- life-threatening
 - bites and stings 57
 - severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) 26
 - asthma emergency 28
 - bleeding, severe, external 34–35
 - heart attack 22–23
 - heat-induced illness 54
 - shock 33
- low blood sugar 29
- marine (bites and stings) 58–59
 - hot water 62
 - vinegar 61
- medical alert device 26, 28,
- medical emergency 25
- medication
 - allergy 26–27
 - angina 21
 - asthma 28
 - diabetes 29
- heart attack 23
- SAMPLE 72
- neck injury 48–50
- nosebleed 42
- patient
 - first aid 71–75
 - general management 74
 - lifting and moving 80
 - secondary assessment 74–75
 - treating 70
- penetrating chest wound 39
- physiology 73
- poisoning 51
- pressure, severe external bleeding 34–35
- pressure bandage and immobilise bites and stings 57–60, 64
- puncture, wound 37, 38
- recovery position 8
- response (DRSABCD) 3
- safety
 - and prevention 76
 - danger 2
 - legal considerations 66–68
- SAMPLE 72
- scald 43
- seated unconscious patient 5, 6
- secondary assessment 74
- send for help (DRSABCD) 4
- severe allergic reaction 26–27
- shock 33
- shoulder injury (dislocation) 46
- snake 57, 60, 64
- spider 60, 63, 64
- spinal injury 48–50
- sprain and strain 45, 46, 47
- stroke 24
 - sudden cardiac arrest 20
 - defibrillation 15–17
 - electric shock 44

- tear (or avulsion) 37
- temperature
 - febrile convulsion 32
 - heat-induced illness 54–55
 - hypothermia 56
 - vital signs 73
- tourniquet 34
- trauma
 - abdominal injury 41
 - penetrating chest wound 39
 - shock 33
- vinegar (bites and stings) 60
- vital signs 73
- workplace
 - legal considerations 66
- wound
 - amputation 40
 - abdominal injury 41
 - bleeding 34–35
 - broken bone (fracture) 45
 - embedded 38
 - first aid 74–75
 - head injury 48–49
 - infection prevention 78–79
 - open 37
 - penetrating chest 39
 - puncture 38
 - wrist (dislocation) 46

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QUICK CONTENTS

DRSABCD action plan	1
danger	2
response	3
send for help	4
airway	5
breathing	7
CPR	9
defibrillation	15
abdominal injury	41
allergic reaction	26
amputation	40
anaphylaxis	26
angina	21
asthma emergency	28
bites and stings	57
bleeding - internal	36
bleeding - severe, external	34
broken bone (fracture)	45
burn and scald	43
choking	18
diabetes emergency	29
dislocation	46
electric shock	44
epileptic seizure	30
eye injuries	52
fainting	31
febrile convulsion	32
head injury	48
heart attack	22
heat-induced illness	54
hypothermia	56
medical emergency	25
nosebleed	42
poisoning	51
recovery position	8
shock	33
spinal and neck injury	50
sprain and strain	47
stroke	24
sudden cardiac arrest	20
wound - embedded	38
wound - open	37
wound - penetrating chest	39

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Heart Foundation
www.heartfoundation.org.au

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