

## Red Cross Stance on Cough CPR

The American Red Cross does not endorse the "How to Survive A Heart Attack When Alone" coughing technique that is being publicized on the Internet. The American Red Cross develops materials from the consensus of medical opinion such as the National Academy of Sciences, the American Heart Association's Emergency Cardiac Care Committee, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American College of Emergency Physicians.

The 1992 *Guidelines for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Emergency Cardiac Care* and the *Guidelines 2000 for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Emergency Cardiovascular Care - International Consensus on Science* briefly discuss the technique called Cough CPR <sup>1</sup>. Cough CPR is a self-administered form of cardiopulmonary resuscitation described by JM Criley in 1976 <sup>2</sup>. According to Criley, self-initiated CPR is possible; however, its use is limited to clinical situations in which the patient has a cardiac monitor, the arrest is recognized before loss of consciousness, and the patient can cough forcefully. To date, there is insufficient scientific research concerning the efficacy of Cough CPR. Therefore, American Red Cross cannot advocate teaching the technique until it has been thoroughly tested in national studies and found to be effective.

As a training organization, the American Red Cross encourages the public to recognize the signals of a heart attack:

- Persistent chest pain or discomfort (which can range from discomfort to an unbearable crushing sensation in the chest) that lasts longer than 3 to 5 minutes or is not relieved by resting, changing position, oral medication, or goes away and then comes back.
- Discomfort, pain or pressure in either arm; discomfort, pain or pressure that spreads to the shoulder, arm, neck or jaw.
- Breathing difficulty, which may cause dizziness.
- Nausea.
- Skin appearance, which may be pale or bluish in color. The face may be moist or may sweat profusely.
- Unconsciousness.

To care for a heart attack victim:

- Recognize the signals of a heart attack.
- Call 911 or the local emergency number for help.
- Convince and help the victim to stop activity and rest comfortably.
- Try to obtain additional information about the victim's condition.
- Assist with medication, if prescribed.
- Monitor the victim's condition.
- Be prepared to give CPR and use an AED if the victim's heart stops beating.

Often a heart attack victim experiences chest pain that does not go away; the pain may spread to the shoulder, arm, neck, jaw or back. It is usually not relieved by resting, changing position or taking medicine. If the pain is severe or does not go away in 3-5 minutes, call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number at once. A heart attack victim may deny that any signal is serious. If it appears as though the victim is having a heart attack, stay calm, reassure the victim, and call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number!

1. American Heart Association Guidelines for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Emergency Cardiac Care. JAMA. 1992; 268(16): 2135-2302.
2. Criley JM, Blaufuss AH, Kissel GL. Cough-induced cardiac compression. JAMA, 1976; 236:1246-1250.