

Resource Article

First Aid

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What Is First Aid?

First aid is giving someone immediate care for an injury or illness before trained medical care is available. Knowing basic first aid can help to save someone's life.

First Aid for Cuts and Scrapes

- Apply firm pressure to stop the bleeding. You can use a bandage, a clean cloth, or even your hand.
- Keep pressing down until the bleeding stops.
- Wash your hands with clean water and soap.
- Put on a clean bandage.
- Check to see if the child or teen has had a tetanus vaccine.

Go to a health care provider for:

- A large or deep wound.
- A wound that looks dirty or ragged.
- A puncture wound, such as one caused by stepping on a nail. (Puncture wounds can easily become infected.)
- A tetanus vaccination after a serious cut.

First Aid for Nosebleeds

- Squeeze the soft part of the nose outside the nostrils.
- Hold the pressure continuously for 5–10 minutes.
- If you stop too soon, you may pull off the blood clot and the bleeding will start again.
- Children and teens can sometimes prevent nosebleeds by applying an ointment such as Vaseline inside the nose and by keeping their fingernails short.

First Aid for Burns

- Put the burned skin in cold water, or run cold water over the burn until the pain is better.
- Do not break any blisters.
- Do not use any ointment, grease, butter, or powder.
- Seek medical care for large or deep burns.

First Aid for Eye Injuries

- For an object in the eye, pull down the lid and try to remove the object with a clean, moist cotton swab.
- For pain due to an object in, a scrape on, or a scratch on the eye, bandage the eye shut. Then seek medical care.

- For chemicals in the eye, flush the eye immediately with clean water. Keep flushing the eye for at least 5–10 minutes without stopping.
- Do not use drops or ointments.
- Seek medical care.

First Aid for a Neck or Back Injury

- Do not move anyone with a neck or back injury.
- Keep the person in place, and call for medical help.

First Aid for Other Injuries

Fractures are broken bones. Sprains are torn ligaments. A strain is a pulled muscle. Both sprains and fractures cause pain and swelling. The pain may become worse when the person moves. Strains can cause pain, stiffness, and bruising.

For a serious injury or when you suspect a broken bone or a sprain:

- Apply a splint to prevent movement.
- If the area is deformed (out of place), there is probably a broken bone.
- If you suspect a broken bone or a bad sprain, seek medical help.
- Also seek medical help if there is a great deal of pain or swelling.

For a minor injury or strain:

- Raise the injured part.
- Cold (ice) compresses may be helpful.
- Rest.
- Use elastic bandages for a few days.
- The injured person can gradually increase his activity over time.