

A **health emergency** usually happens without warning and providing first aid quickly can make a difference for the health and safety of someone who needs assistance. Not every medical event that benefits from first aid requires emergency medical personnel to respond to the scene, but it's important to the person who needs help to be able to rely on someone to call 911 (or emergency services) if needed.

Here are the general guidelines for providing first aid.

1. Recognize the emergency.
2. Check the scene for safety. Make sure there is no danger to you or anyone else. Never enter an unsafe scene.
3. Check the person. Always look for life-threatening conditions before starting to give care.
4. Call 911 (or emergency services) if necessary.
5. Provide care. Obtain consent to provide first aid. If the person is unresponsive, it's okay to provide care. Provide only the first aid care you have been trained to give.
6. Have the person seek medical attention if needed.



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This safety topic provides basic first aid guidance if someone nearby is choking, has a seizure, faints, or has a severe allergic reaction.

The information provided in this safety topic is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice or formal first aid training.

If you suspect a person is **choking**, giving abdominal thrusts can apply pressure to remove the obstruction that is preventing them from breathing.

A person who is choking cannot speak or cough and may be giving the universal sign of choking by holding their neck with one or both hands to signal that they cannot breathe.

If someone near you starts choking, and no one with formal first aid training is nearby, follow these steps, provided by the CDC.

1. Ask the person if they are choking. DO NOT perform abdominal thrusts if the person is coughing forcefully and is able to speak.
2. If they are unable to cough or speak, perform abdominal thrusts:
 - Stand behind the person and wrap your arms around the person's waist.
 - Make a fist with one hand. Place the thumb side of your fist just above the person's navel, well below the breastbone.
 - Grasp the fist tightly with your other hand.
 - Make a quick, upward and inward thrust with your fist. Press hard into the abdomen, as if trying to lift the person up.
 - Check if the object was dislodged.
 - Continue thrusts until the object is dislodged or the person loses consciousness.
3. Call 911 (or emergency services) if the person loses consciousness.
 - Always call 911 (or emergency services) in a life-threatening emergency.



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There are many types of **seizures** and most only last a few minutes. Seizures do not usually require emergency medical attention and there are some steps you can take if a co-worker has a seizure.

To help someone who is having any type of seizure:

- Stay with them until the seizure ends and they are fully awake.
- Once they are awake, help them to sit in a safe place and calmly tell them what happened.

To help someone who is having a generalized tonic-clonic seizure (also known as a grand mal seizure) where they might cry out, fall or shake, the CDC advises those administering first aid to:

1. Ease the person onto the floor.
2. Turn them gently onto one side to help them breathe.
 - Do not hold them down or try to stop their movements.
3. Clear the area of anything hard or sharp to prevent injury.
4. Put something soft and flat, like a folded jacket, under their head and remove eyeglasses.
5. Loosen ties, scarfs or anything around the neck that may make it difficult to breathe.
 - Do not put anything in their mouth.
6. Time the seizure. Call 911 (or emergency services) if it lasts longer than 5 minutes.
 - Call 911 (or emergency services) if the person has difficulty breathing or waking after the seizure, or if they have another seizure very soon after the first one.



A **fainting** episode can occur when your brain temporarily doesn't receive enough blood supply, causing you to lose consciousness, usually only briefly.

Fainting may have no medical significance, or it can be related to a serious disorder, often involving the heart.

If you feel faint, lie or sit down and don't get up too quickly. If you sit down, you can place your head between your knees.



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If someone else faints, offer the following first aid actions:

- Position them on their back. If they are not injured and they are breathing, you can raise their legs above their heart (about 12 inches). Loosen belts, collars or other constrictive clothing.
- Once they are awake, help them to sit in a safe place and calmly tell them what happened.
- To reduce the chances of fainting again, don't allow the person to get up too quickly.
- If the person doesn't regain consciousness within 1 minute, call 911 (or emergency services).
- If the person stops breathing, call 911 (or emergency services) and begin CPR.

A life-threatening **allergic reaction** (anaphylaxis) can cause shock, breathing difficulties and a sudden drop in blood pressure. Common triggers include medication, foods like peanuts or shellfish, and insect stings. In some people, anaphylaxis can occur minutes after exposure to an allergen or there may be a delayed reaction.

Signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis may include:

- Hives or itching
- Flushed or pale skin
- Swelling of the face, eyes, lips or throat
- Difficulty breathing, like wheezing
- Weak and rapid pulse
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Dizziness or fainting



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If you are with someone having an allergic reaction with signs of anaphylaxis, don't wait to see whether symptoms get better. Call 911 (or emergency services) immediately. While waiting for emergency medical personnel to arrive:

- Ask them if they have an epi-pen. If they do and they request help using it, this is usually done by pressing the autoinjector against the person's thigh.
- Have them lie still on their back, loosen tight clothing and cover them with a blanket. Do not give them anything to drink.
- If they stop breathing, begin CPR.



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