



# The ABCs of CPR

More than 900 Americans die because of sudden cardiac arrest every day, according to the American Heart Association (AHA). Between 75 percent and 80 percent of all sudden cardiac arrests occur at home, and survival does depend on how quickly defibrillation, either through CPR or an automated external defibrillator (AED), can be administered. With every minute that passes an individual's rate of survival drops by seven to ten percent. After several minutes of no treatment, resuscitation is almost impossible.

CPR is as simple as ABC, as you'll see from a review of the procedures recommended by the AHA below.

1. First, of course, check to see if the person is responsive. Gently shake the victim and shout, "Are you okay?"
2. If you get a response, you don't need to perform CPR. If you get no response, dial 9-1-1 or point to a bystander and ask that individual to call 9-1-1.
3. Then begin the ABCs of CPR.



## A: Airway

If the person is unresponsive, open the airway. If the person has no head or neck injuries, lift the chin with one hand and push down on the forehead with your other hand to tilt the head back. Place your ear near the mouth and listen and feel for breath; at the same time, look at the chest to see if it's rising and falling.

## B: Breathing

If the person isn't breathing normally, give two rescue breaths by keeping the head tilted, pinching the nose closed, and placing your mouth around the victim's mouth. Give the victim two slow, full breaths (about two seconds each) while watching to see that the chest rises with each breath. After giving those two breaths, check for signs of circulation, including breathing, coughing, movement or response to gentle shaking. Continue keeping the head tilted while you place your ear near the mouth. Look, listen and feel for signs of breathing while watching for movement. The AHA doesn't recommend trying to find a pulse.

## **C: Circulation**

If you don't detect circulation, begin chest compressions. Place the heel of one hand in the center of the chest between the victim's nipples with the heel of your second hand on top. Position your body directly over your hands, elbows locked. For an adult victim, apply 15 compressions, pushing the breastbone down about two inches with each thrust. Allow the chest to return to normal between compressions. Use the full weight of your body-don't be scared about cracking ribs-and don't bend your elbows. After 15 compressions, give two more rescue breaths. Repeat this pump-and-blow cycle three more times for a total of 60 compressions. Recheck for signs of circulation. If you don't see any, resume the pump-and-blow cycle until circulation resumes or help arrives.

Remember these three things when administering CPR:

1. Breathe at a normal rate
2. Compress hard
3. Try not to let too much time lapse between compression cycles

## **How an AED Can Save Lives**

While CPR is still the most common method to resuscitate victims after cardiac arrest, using an automated external defibrillator (AED) in conjunction with CPR may prove to be more effective. An AED is a computerized device that delivers an electric shock to the heart. Numerous public facilities, including health clubs, airports and shopping malls, are now putting AEDs on site. As with CPR, training is required to use an AED, but because the device uses voice prompts, lights and text messages to walk a rescuer through the process, it's easy to learn. With CPR alone, survival rates hover around five percent. Yet add an AED to the scenario and survival rates rise significantly.

That doesn't mean you should underestimate the power and contribution of CPR. Start CPR immediately and if possible, send someone else to call 9-1-1 and get the AED. Then continue CPR until the AED is ready.

## **Getting Certified in CPR and AED**

If you're looking for certification options, ACE has an American Heart Association course for you. The eight-hour Heartsaver First Aid with CPR and AED course is offered four times a year at select cities throughout the country and is taught by ACE-certified instructors. The certificate is valid for two years.

This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or [riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com](mailto:riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com).