

CPR...a Skill for Everyone

If you are with someone who has a heart attack would you know what to do? If you are caring for your grandchild who was choking or not breathing, would you know what to do? If you are walking with your friend/spouse and he/she collapsed and stopped breathing, would you know what to do?

Almost all of us have heard that everyone should know how to perform basic CPR but a relatively small percentage of us have recently taken any CPR training. Why should all adults, regardless of their age, learn basic CPR?

1. **Cardiovascular disease is very common.** In fact, it is the #1 killer in the United States. Heart attacks happen suddenly and 70% of people who suffer cardiac arrest outside of a hospital, nursing home or medical facility (where health professionals can respond almost immediately) will not survive.
2. **Most medical emergencies occur in a person's home or in a public place.** If family members or friends don't know CPR, life can be lost in mere minutes while waiting for medical help to arrive.
3. **CPR buys time for the victim.** Once the heart stops beating, brain death can occur in 4 to 6 minutes. Performing CPR provides oxygen to the brain and other vital organs. This gives the victim the best chance of full recovery after emergency/medical services.

What is CPR? It is short for "cardio pulmonary resuscitation" and is actually a life-saving technique. The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as: *An emergency procedure in which the heart and lungs are made to work by manually compressing the chest overlying the heart and forcing air into the lungs. CPR is used to maintain circulation when the heart stops pumping usually because of disease, drugs, or trauma.* Its primary purpose is to attempt to restore circulation of the blood and prevent death or brain damage due to lack of oxygen.

If you asked numerous American adults whether or not it would be a good thing to know basic CPR, you probably would get an almost unanimous affirmative answer. However the American Heart Association estimates only about 20% of adults have received any type of CPR training. The three most common excuses given for not knowing CPR are:

- Not enough time/too busy
- Not enough money/ don't want to pay for training
- No access to classes

Others say they don't want to get sued if they were to perform CPR or they might get AIDS for doing CPR. There is no known instance in which a lay person who performed CPR has been sued successfully (you are protected by "Good Samaritan" laws) and there are no documented cases to date of transmission of AIDS via CPR.

In October, 2010 the American Heart Association issued new guidelines for the performance of CPR. The major change compared to their prior guidelines is to now start with chest compressions rather than breaths. The new sequence (for adults and children..not infants) is:

1. Check for unresponsiveness and lack of breathing. Tap the person on the shoulder and ask “Are you OK?” If the person responds, do NOT do CPR!
2. Call 911 for emergency personnel or ask someone else to call 911.
3. Perform 30 chest compressions – push hard and push fast in the center of the chest at a rate of 100 per minute. It is suggested that you kneel next to the person’s head and neck and place the heel of one hand over the center of the person’s chest, between the nipples. Place your other hand on top of the first hand. Keep your elbows straight and position your shoulders directly above your hands. Use your upper body weight, not just your arms, as you push straight down on the chest at least 2 inches.
4. If you are trained in CPR give 2 ventilations (breaths via the mouth) and then alternate 30 compressions with 2 ventilations.
5. If you are not trained in CPR, just continue with chest compressions.

It is much better to do something than to do nothing as the person’s life may depend on you. The survival rate drops by up to 10% every minute when treatment is delayed or not given.

Today AEDs (automated external defibrillators) are commonly found in many public places such as schools, airports, public pools, offices, etc. These machines are designed to be used by laypersons who ideally should have received AED training but if not, many of the machines include simple instructions for use.

You can learn to do CPR the right way – for adults, children and infants – at an introductory CPR session that will be facilitated by Delta College Associate Professor of Lifelong Wellness Kara Jimenez, PhD, MS, ACE. Every third Friday of the month the Delta College *50+...Just Like Gold Program* hosts “Bits and Bites” sessions from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm (the format is a bit of information along with a bite to eat). Our Friday, November 18th session will solely focus on CPR training. After being introduced to CPR basics you will have the opportunity to try giving CPR on one of the mannequins that will be provided. You are advised to wear comfortable shoes and clothing so you can fully participate. Make your reservation now to join us for this informative and potential life saving meeting by calling the Delta College LifeLong Learning Office (989) 686-9444.

The bottom line is...you need to learn basic CPR. No more excuses. Make the commitment. Do it!

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