

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.

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 booster 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.