

WELLNESSMONTHLY

First Aid or Emergency? Know the Difference | July 2022



First-aid, CPR and AED training will help prepare you to assist someone who is injured or having a medical emergency until first responders arrive.

First Aid or Emergency? Know the Difference

There are many songs and poems about the joys of summer. There are also a lot of ways a summertime outing can be derailed if health and safety are not treated as a priority.

Advice about how to prevent sunburn and heat stress, be safe when in and near water, prepare for severe weather events and avoid mishaps while on vacation abounds. But what if a medical emergency occurs? Will you know what to do?

Calling 911

Medical emergencies can be obvious, such as when a person has stopped breathing, is unconscious, bleeding profusely, or appears to have broken bones or a head injury. But sometimes it's hard to know whether to call for emergency medical assistance. If you are unsure, emergency response professionals recommend calling 911 so a dispatcher can evaluate the situation.

Dispatchers are trained in advanced first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs). Other skills include critical incident stress management, domestic violence de-escalation, hazardous materials handling and suicide intervention.

The American College of Emergency Physicians recommends calling 911 if you can answer "yes" to any of these questions:

- Is the condition threatening to life or limb?
- Could the condition rapidly worsen on the way to the hospital without emergency transport?
- If the person is moved by non-medical professionals, is it likely to cause further injury?

As a caller, you will be expected to stay calm and stay on the line until the dispatcher tells you to hang up. It's important to be as specific as possible about where you are. If available, your mobile phone GPS may be used as a locator. The dispatcher will provide care instructions until help arrives. This may include ways to make the person more comfortable or safety move them out of harm's way.

Did You Know?

Starting July 16, 2022, Americans can call 988 to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

When NOT to Call 911

It is not recommended to call 911 for sprains and strains that can be relieved with remedies such as elevation, ice, over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications or soft bandages. Minor burns, shallow cuts and insect bites can also be self-treated with first aid.

Health officials say neck pain, dental problems, hives, pinched nerves, sinus infections, acute upper-respiratory ailments and eye discomfort are among common reasons for emergency room visits that are usually better handled in other settings. Most cases involving fever, flu and cold symptoms, or food poisoning, while uncomfortable, can be managed at home.

If you mistakenly call 911, stay on the line and tell the dispatcher the call was made in error. Otherwise, a law enforcement officer may have to take time to check on your welfare.

First Aid

In the workplace, first aid and medical treatment are defined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in [29 CFR, Section 1910.151, Subpart K](#). Under the standard, adequate first aid supplies must be readily available to employees. Outside of the workplace, there are additional personal considerations, such as when a group of people, a child or elderly relative are injured or ill.

First aid may consist of attention to simple problems or emergency help until first responders arrive. First aid supplies should be stored in water-proof containers at home and in vehicles. A small, portable kit also comes in handy when playing sports and doing outdoor activities.

Related Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Must-Haves for Your First-Aid Kit](#)

FEMA: [How to Build a Kit for Emergencies](#)

OSHA: [Standard 1910, Subpart R, First-aid Kits](#)

Red Cross: [Make a First-Aid Kit for a family of four](#)

Summertime Wellness Tips

Heat Illness: Drink water throughout the day. Use sports beverages to replace electrolytes lost when sweating. Rest in a cool place. Use wet cloths to cool your skin. Wear light-weight clothing, a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen. Allow time to adapt to heat and humidity. Avoid overexertion on high heat index days.

Bug Bites: Use insect repellent that contains 20 to 30 percent DEET to protect against mosquitoes, ticks and other bugs. As feasible, cover exposed skin, including ankles, feet, hands and neck, especially when in densely wooded or marshy areas. If sleeping outdoors, use bed nets. An over-the-counter pain reliever can be used to relieve discomfort from bites that swell, sting or itch. Apply ice to swollen skin. Be prepared if you know you are allergic to bites or stings.

Water Safety: Learn how to swim or improve your swimming skills. On the water, use life jackets and closely supervise children. Avoid drinking alcohol or taking drugs that may impair judgment when boating, fishing or swimming. Do not dive into water if you are unsure about the depth or there may be hidden objects. Obey warning signs about water quality and other risks, such as rip tides or shark sightings. Limit time in a high-temperature hot tub or jacuzzi.

Situational Awareness: Before leaving home, check the weather forecast. Summer thunderstorms can produce lightning and downpours that cause flooding. Plan outdoor activities to avoid exposure to extremely hot, humid conditions. When traveling, know where you are headed and secure your belongings. Plan the best route for conditions. If taking public transportation, check departure and arrival times. Give yourself plenty of time to reduce stress.