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Emergency Preparedness Pointers

Common First Aid Do's And Don'ts

Whether it's during a disaster or everyday life, you may need to help someone. But, good intentions don't always lead to good results. Here is a list of common first aid mistakes, followed by the recommended actions to take.

Burns

Don't— Apply butter or any other oily substances or ice to soothe the burn. When covering the burn, do not use a towel or blanket; loose fibers from these items could become stuck to the skin.

Do— Treat the burn with cool water. If the burn is severe and begins to blister, wrap it loosely with dry sterile bandage (dressing) and seek medical attention. Be careful not to break blisters on serious burns or if any clothing is stuck to the skin, leave it in place.

Electrical Burns

Don't— Shake it off, say it wasn't that bad and not seek medical attention. If someone has received a jolt of electricity (lightning, power cord, downed power line) they may have injuries that are not evident.

Do— Go to the nearest medical facility for assessment and treatment. More than 500 people a year die from electrical burns in the U.S. These burns can cause serious internal injury without obvious external damage.

Sprains, Strains, Fractures

Don't— Apply heat in an attempt to loosen up muscles. Heat could increase swelling and slow down the healing process.

Do— Apply ice to the injured area for 20 minutes to reduce swelling. Make sure there is a thin barrier between the ice and skin. If a fracture is suspected, seek medical care.

Poisoning

Don't— Give a poisoned person milk or water to dilute the poison. Many of the more common sources of poisoning could react more when mixed with other liquids. It is also very important to not induce vomiting. This may create additional damage if the poison is any type of corrosive substance.

Do— Locate the container of the poison and call the Poison Center (1-800-222-1222) immediately. The container label may have instructions for proper first aid treatment. If the person is in severe pain, has trouble breathing or is unconscious call 911 for emergency medical help right away.

Severed Body Part

Don't— Put a severed body part directly on ice.

Do— Preserve the severed finger, toe or other appendage. Wrap the severed part in damp gauze. Use saline if available to dampen the gauze. Place the wrapped body part in a water tight bag and place the bag on top of some ice. Keep the wound covered with a clean, dry cloth. Seek medical attention immediately.

Knocked Out Tooth

Don't— Handle the tooth by the root, or scrub it if it's dirty.

Do— Find the tooth, rinse it gently in cool water while holding it by the crown (the white part). Place the tooth in a glass of milk for transport and seek emergency dental treatment immediately. Replanting the tooth or holding it between the cheek and gum will preserve it, but this runs the risk of the victim swallowing the loose tooth. This is why transporting it in milk is recommended, especially for younger people.

Nose Bleed

Don't— Lean or tilt the head back. After the bleeding has stopped, don't have the person blow their nose.

Do— Sit upright, lean slightly forward and pinch it steadily just below the nasal bone for 5-10 minutes. If bleeding persists for 15 minutes or it seems like a lot of blood is swallowed, go to the emergency room.

You should call 911 whenever someone is experiencing chest pain, shortness of breath, fainting, confusion or uncontrollable bleeding. If you have the opportunity, take a first aid class to be better prepared.



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