

Basic First Aid

*Josefa Peña, Extension Program Specialist—Health
The Texas A&M University System*

In an emergency, it can be vital that you know basic first aid. Remember these five steps:

- Stay calm so you can decide how to help.
- Make sure the scene is safe. If the area is dangerous or if the scene becomes unsafe, move to a safe area.
- Check the victim. Is he or she awake? Breathing? Bleeding?
- Get help. Dial 9-1-1 and be able to explain exactly where you are.
- Administer first aid as needed.

Here are some actions to take for various injuries, emergencies or medical conditions:

Choking

Choking occurs when food or small objects are lodged in the throat or windpipe. The universal sign for choking is hands clutched over the throat. Quick action is needed to save a life. Learn how to do the Heimlich maneuver:

- Stand behind the victim and make a fist with one hand. Place your fist just above the person's belly button. Your thumb should be toward the person's stomach.
- Reach around the person's body and grab your fist with your other hand. Make sure your elbows are pointed out.
- Quickly thrust upward 5 times
- Repeat these steps until the person has dislodged the object and can breathe or has become unconscious.

If the victim becomes unconscious, lay them on their back on the floor.

Try to remove any visible blockage from their throat by reaching into their mouth with your finger to sweep out any foreign object. Be sure not to push the object farther into the victims airway.

If you cannot remove the object and the victim is unresponsive—begin CPR

To prepare yourself for an emergency take a certified first aid and CPR training course. Visit the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org to find classes near you.

Cuts, scrapes and punctures

- Wash your hands.
- Put on gloves or use a layer of fabric or plastic between your hands and the wound.
- Stop the bleeding by putting firm pressure on the wound with a clean cloth.
- If the wound appears to need stitches have a doctor examine it.
- If stitches are not needed, wash the wound with soap and water.
- Wash hands again with soap and warm water.
- Apply antibiotic ointment and a bandage to the wound.
- Watch for signs of infection (swelling, redness, pain, discharge, etc.)
- Replace the bandage daily until the wound has healed.

If the bleeding doesn't stop:

- Have the person sit down.
- Raise the area that is bleeding higher than their heart.
- Call 911

Nosebleeds

If a person has a nosebleed, have the person:

- Sit up straight.
- Lean their head slightly forward and put their chin to their chest.
- Squeeze their nose shut with their thumb and index finger and wait until the bleeding stops. It can take 10 to 30 minutes.
- Don't put anything up the nose to stop the bleeding, and don't have them lean backward because blood will run down their throat and cause them to vomit.

Animal Bites

- Wash the wound with soap and water.
- Control the bleeding (see *Cuts, scrapes and punctures*).

Seek prompt medical attention—animal bites are easily infected and can transmit diseases such as rabies.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

AgriLifeExtension.tamu.edu

More Extension publications can be found at AgriLifeBookstore.org

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.