

Health and Safety Toolbox Talk No: 146

First Aid during Covid-19 outbreak



If you have been trained in first aid you may be wondering how you can put your skills to use to support people whilst at work. The simple answer is to carry on using the lifesaving skills you have been taught.

Hygiene and first aid

It is important to remember first aid has always had to consider the risk of infection, not just from coronavirus (Covid-19) but from other infections such as HIV, hepatitis and other viruses or infections which have the potential to do harm.

Normal hygiene measures are known to lessen the risk of infection and should be followed.

Wear gloves, goggles, masks and disposable aprons if easily available

Wearing gloves creates a barrier between you and the casualty. Even if you wear gloves it is still important to wash your hands after helping someone. If gloves are not easily available, then treat the casualty as normal but be sure to wash your hands at the earliest opportunity- every second counts and delaying help to get gloves can have a detrimental effect on the outcome for your casualty.

Wash your hands after any contact with someone.

Following current government advice around handwashing is known to reduce the risk of infection. Wash your hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser gel if water is not available.

Each situation will need to be assessed to ensure everyone is as protected as possible

Can the injured party help themselves? Most first aid is very simple and the steps to take in an emergency can be described or explained to an injured or ill person so they can help themselves e.g. If they are bleeding heavily, you can ask them to apply pressure to the wound with whatever they have available while you call 999.

If someone is so badly injured or ill that they are unable to help themselves, it is even more important we step in and try to help. For example, not helping someone who is not responsive or not breathing will dramatically reduce their chance of survival. However, if you fall into one of the identified coronavirus risk group additional caution should be taken.



If you do need to provide assistance to an individual, who you are concerned may have an infection, wherever possible place the person in a location away from others. If there is no physically separate room, ask others who are not involved, to provide assistance and stay at least 2 metres away from the individual. If barriers or screens are available, these may be used.

Compression only CPR

As a precaution the Resuscitation Council UK have provided updated advice:

1. Check if they need CPR by looking for absence of signs of life and normal breathing.

Do not listen or feel for breathing by placing your ear and cheek close to the persons mouth. If you are unsure, assume they are absent.

2. Call 999 as soon as possible.

If a coronavirus infection is suspected, tell them when you call 999.

3. Give chest compressions: push firmly downwards in the middle of the chest and then release.

If you think there is a risk of infection, you should attempt compression only CPR and if available use an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). Continue until the ambulance arrives.

Wear a face mask, disposable gloves and eye protection if available. If you decide to perform rescue breaths on someone who is not breathing, use a resuscitation face shield where available

4. Wash your hands

After performing compression-only CPR, you should wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water; alcohol-based hand gel can be used if this isn't available. You should also seek advice from the NHS 111 coronavirus advice service.

5. If there has been a blood or body-fluid spill

Keep people away from the area. Use a spill-kit if available, using the PPE in the kit or PPE that has been provided and following the instructions provided with the spill-kit. If no spill-kit is available, place paper towels/roll onto the spill, and seek further advice from emergency services when they arrive.

Advice and guidance information from:

British Red Cross (<https://www.redcross.org.uk>)

St John Ambulance (<https://www.sja.org.uk>)

Resuscitation Council Uk (<https://www.resus.org.uk>)

