



Hands-Only CPR

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Hands-Only CPR?

A: Hands-Only CPR is CPR without giving mouth-to-mouth breaths.

Q: How common is Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

A: More common than most people realize. Nearly 300,000 occur annually in the United States.

Q: Is Sudden Cardiac Arrest the same as a Heart Attack?

A: No. A heart attack occurs when the blood supply to part of the heart muscle is blocked. This typically causes chest arm or back pain – but the person remains awake. Sudden Cardiac Arrest is an electrical disorder of the heart which causes it to stop beating. Without blood flow the brain stops working and the victim collapses and is unconscious.

Q: Who should receive Hands-Only CPR?

A: Hands-Only CPR can be used on anyone who is unresponsive and not breathing. It is most effective on adults who suddenly collapse. For all others it is far better to start Hands-Only CPR than to do nothing.

Q: Is Hands Only CPR as effective as conventional CPR for sudden collapse?

A: Yes. In fact, because there is no delay to starting chest compressions, it may even be better.

Q: Why don't people who suddenly collapse need mouth-to-mouth breathing?

A: Blood contains enough oxygen to keep vital organs healthy for the first few minutes, as long as it is circulated with good chest compressions.

Q: Do I need to do CPR? Can't I just call 911 and wait for EMS to arrive?

A: You should not wait. For every minute without CPR, survival from cardiac arrest decreases by 7-10%. The time from calling 911 to arrival of EMS is usually longer than five minutes, so waiting for EMS will cut the person's chance of survival in half.

Q: In a public place someone will know CPR. Is it important for me to learn too?

A: 80% of cardiac arrests occur at home, so the life you save with CPR is most likely to be someone you know: a child, a spouse, a parent or a friend.

Q: Will I get certified in CPR by learning Hands-Only CPR in Hands Helping Hearts?

A: No. Our Hands-Only CPR training is designed to give you the skills needed to help a person who collapses and is unconscious and not breathing. We do not issue individual certificates.

Q: Do I still need to learn conventional CPR - with mouth-to-mouth breathing?

A: For some medical emergencies conventional CPR may be better than Hands-Only CPR.

Examples are:

- Unresponsive infants and children
- Adults who are found already unconscious and not breathing normally
- Drowning or collapse due to breathing problems

To be able to best help in these situations we still recommend you take a CPR course.

Q: If I know conventional CPR and I see someone collapse, what should I do?

A: If you are confident in your ability to provide CPR that includes breaths with high-quality chest compressions and minimal interruptions, then provide either conventional CPR or Hands-Only CPR. If you are not confident in your conventional CPR skills, begin Hands-Only CPR.

Q: What do I do if I find someone who has collapsed but no one saw it happen?

A: Call 911 and start CPR. If you learned conventional CPR (with mouth-to-mouth breathing), then call 911 and provide CPR as you learned it. If you only know Hands-Only CPR, do that. Some CPR is better than none.

Q: Not everyone who suddenly collapses is in cardiac arrest. Will CPR hurt them?

A: CPR is far more likely to help. Adults who suddenly collapse and are not responsive probably have had a sudden cardiac arrest, and, if so, there is almost no chance of survival unless someone takes action immediately. If the person has collapsed for some other reason, Hands-Only CPR could still help by causing the person to respond (begin to move, breathe normally or speak). If that happens, CPR should be stopped.

Q: Can you break someone's ribs doing CPR?

A: Yes. In fact it is common. But, without CPR the person will not survive, and the rib fractures do not cause serious harm. People who do survive consider rib fractures to be a minor annoyance – especially compared to the alternative.

Q: What should I do if I am getting tired?

A: Continue to provide hard and fast chest compressions with minimal interruption to the best of your ability. Some CPR is better than none.

Q: Where can I go to get more information?

A: Go to www.americanheart.org/handsonlycpr to learn more about Hands-Only CPR. For more information on conventional CPR or to find a CPR class near you, www.americanheart.org/cpr or www.redcross.org