

Keeping the air flowing

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Cardiopulmonary resuscitation can be the difference between life and death.

Adults, children and infants may suffer life-threatening emergencies outside a hospital or doctor's care. These emergencies may include respiratory arrest, cardiac arrest and choking. Victims are more likely to survive if CPR is administered quickly and properly.

Jeanne Campbell, a nurse at Stillwater Medical Center, recently taught parents at the Payne County Health Department about infant and child CPR and the "Chain of Survival" with materials provided by the American Heart Association.



There are four links in the Chain of Survival. They include prevention, early CPR, early access to medical personnel via 911 and early advanced care by medical professionals.

For infants, one of the biggest causes of death is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. To help prevent SIDS, it's suggested babies never be placed on their stomachs when sleeping. Instead, infants should be placed on their backs or sides.

Other prevention ideas include always making sure infants and children are properly restrained by car seats or seat belts when riding in a car; always making sure they are wearing proper protective equipment when riding a bicycle, especially a helmet; and always supervising children at play, especially near a swimming pool, bathtub or busy streets.

Things parents can do to keep children safer include keeping poisonous materials out of reach, storing all firearms unloaded and locked away, placing gates on all windows above the ground floor, using gates to block stairways and keeping toys or other items small enough to fit through a standard toilet paper roll away from small children who may stick them in their mouth and choke.

The steps a person should take if they find an adult or child/infant unresponsive differ slightly.

For an adult, the rescuer should shout for help, phone 911 first and then begin CPR. For a child/infant, they should shout for help, begin CPR and continue for approximately one minute, and then phone 911. However, no matter the age of the victim, if there is someone else present, send them to phone 911 immediately while you begin CPR.

There are signs people need to recognize when someone is having a medical emergency.

Respiratory arrest occurs when a person stops breathing or breathes so slowly or shallowly they don't get enough oxygen. The victim will become unresponsive and show no signs of breathing. Prolonged respiratory arrest can lead to cardiac arrest.

When cardiac arrest occurs, immediate action must be taken. One sign of cardiac arrest is unresponsiveness from the victim. Someone should phone 911 immediately.

Another sign is abnormal breathing. Two rescue breaths should be administered.

One last signal of cardiac arrest is no signs of circulation. After two rescue breaths have been given, the victim still doesn't respond. There is no normal breathing, coughing or movement and they remain limp and lifeless.

A good way to check for circulation is placing your ear directly in front of the victim's nose and mouth and look, listen and feel for breathing or body movement.

If CPR is required, the way it's administered also differs slightly depending on the age of the victim.

For children 1-year-old or younger, only two fingers, generally the index and middle fingers, should be used for chest compressions. When giving rescue breaths, don't pinch their nose closed.

Instead, cover their nose and mouth with your mouth, making sure there's a good seal. Then, give gentle, slow breaths using only the air in your cheeks. Don't give full breaths from your lungs.

For older children, the heel of one hand should be used for chest compressions. Their nose should be pinched closed and a good seal should be made between the rescuer's mouth and the victim's. Fuller breaths from the lungs may be needed, depending on the victim's size.

For adults, both hands, interlocked, should be used for chest compressions. The nose should be pinched shut and a good seal formed between mouths. Deep breaths from the lungs should be administered.

No matter the age of the victim, the rescuer should make sure the chest rises each time a breath is given. Five chest compressions should be administered for each breath given.

Choking usually occurs when a foreign object blocks the airway. When the airway is completely blocked, the victim cannot get air into the lungs. The universal sign for choking is clutching the throat between the thumb and forefinger of one or both hands. If the person can't breathe, talk or cough, the Heimlich maneuver should be used to unblock the airway.

Stillwater Medical Center offers a CPR course the first Saturday of every month for a fee of \$40. Preregistration must be made by either calling the education department at 742-5488 or coming by their office at SMC. They also offer a renewal course the second Wednesday of each month for \$15.

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