



### What is First Aid?

First aid refers to the initial medical care given immediately after an injury or accident, typically at the site of the incident. It involves simple and temporary treatments that can be provided without advanced equipment or extensive training. First aid may involve activities such as cleansing small cuts, treating minor burns, applying bandages, draining blisters, removing foreign objects from the eyes, performing basic massage, and ensuring hydration to prevent heat-related issues.

### First Aid in a workplace: What should workers know about First Aid?

Designated Workplace First Aiders need to receive appropriate training in first aid to ensure they can provide assistance during an emergency. It's also important for all workers to be prepared and knowledgeable about the following aspects of first aid:



1. **Procedures for first aid:** Workers should be aware of the steps to follow when first aid is required. This includes knowing when and how to report injuries, whom to contact for help, and staying with the victim until professional first aid attendants arrive.
2. **Location of first aid resources:** Workers should know the location of the first aid room and/or first aid kits in their workplace. This ensures that they can quickly access the necessary supplies in case of an emergency.
3. **Availability of first aid attendants:** Workers should have access to a list of first aid attendants, indicating their location or contact information. This allows them to reach out to the designated attendants for assistance during an emergency.
4. **Nearest medical facilities:** It's important for workers to know the location, operating hours, and contact details of the nearest medical facilities. This information enables them to quickly seek professional medical help when needed.
5. **Contact information of key personnel:** Workers should have access to a list of key personnel within the organization, including their names, titles, and telephone numbers. The list should be prioritized with instructions on whom to contact first, second, and so on, in case of an emergency.

### First Aid kit contents

It is essential to have a first aid kit easily accessible in various locations like your home, cottage, car, boat, workplace, and recreational areas. Keep the kit in a dry area and make sure to replace any used or expired items regularly.

A first aid kit should contain the following:

- Emergency telephone numbers for EMS/9-1-1, your local poison control centre, and your personal doctors
- Home and office phone numbers for family members, friends, or neighbours who can help
- Sterile gauze pads (dressings) in small and large squares to place over wounds
- Adhesive tape
- Roller and triangular bandages to hold dressings in place or to make an arm sling
- Adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Safety pins
- Instant ice packs
- Disposable non-latex gloves, such as surgical or examination gloves
- Flashlight, with extra batteries in a separate bag
- Antiseptic wipes or soap
- Pencil and pad
- Emergency blanket
- Eye patches
- Thermometer
- Barrier devices, such as a pocket mask or face shield
- Canadian Red Cross first aid manual

### Common First Aid mistakes

While first aid is crucial in emergencies, there are some common mistakes that people can make. It's important to be aware of these mistakes to ensure effective and safe first aid administration.

Here are some common first aid mistakes to avoid:

- **Applying butter to a burn**  
Using butter on a burn is often suggested, but it is incorrect advice. Greasy substances trap heat, which can hinder proper healing and treatment of the burn.  
**What to do:** Run cold water over the burn to alleviate pain. Gently dry the area and loosely cover it. Seek medical care promptly if blisters form, the color changes, or signs of infection appear.
- **Applying rubbing alcohol to reduce fever**  
Rubbing alcohol on the skin creates a cooling sensation, but it is not effective for reducing fever. Moreover, alcohol can be absorbed through the skin, posing a risk of alcohol poisoning, especially in young children.  
**What to do:** Use fever-reducing medications containing ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Seek medical advice if unsure or if the fever persists.
- **Using a tourniquet to stop bleeding from a wound**  
Applying a tourniquet to an extremity to control bleeding from a deep wound can cut off blood supply to the entire limb, potentially causing serious damage.  
**What to do:** Apply direct downward pressure on the wound with sterile gauze or hands. Once bleeding stops, secure the wound with a wrap. If bleeding continues or stitches are needed, seek medical attention. In severe, life-threatening bleeding that can't be controlled, apply a tourniquet (at least 3 inches wide) just above the wound and seek immediate medical care.
- **Rubbing the eye to remove a foreign object**  
When there is a foreign object in the eye, rubbing it can worsen the damage and discomfort.  
**What to do:** Rinse the eye with clean tap water instead. If the sensation persists, seek medical attention.



- **Using ipecac syrup to induce vomiting**  
In the past, ipecac syrup was commonly used to induce vomiting after ingesting poisonous substances. However, ipecac syrup is no longer recommended as it can cause additional harm and some substances are more dangerous when vomited.  
**What to do:** Immediately call a healthcare provider or Health Canada's toll-free number, 1-844 POISON-X, or 1-844-764-7669. By calling this number, Canadians will now be re-routed to their local poison centre regardless of where they are calling from in the country.
- **Applying heat to a sprain or fracture**  
Heat may provide relief for general aches, but it should not be applied to sprains or fractures as it can increase swelling.  
**What to do:** Use ice or an ice pack wrapped in a thin cloth for about 20 minutes. Follow the RICE (rest, ice, compression, elevation) method within the first 24 hours.
- **Using hot water on frozen skin**  
To warm frozen skin or limbs, some people may consider using hot water, but this can cause skin damage if the water is too hot.  
**What to do:** Gradually warm the skin or limb with a warm water bath, ensuring the water is not excessively hot.

Remember, if you're unsure about how to provide first aid or if the situation is beyond your capabilities, it is always best to call emergency services, follow their instructions or wait for professional medical help to arrive.

**Bottom line – First Aid saves lives.**

Have questions regarding this bulletin, or workplace health and safety?

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