

Steps to Take If a Heart Attack Occurs

Follow these steps when you observe the signs of a heart attack:

1. Call 911 immediately.
2. Have the person rest comfortably. Breathing may be easier in a sitting position.
3. Loosen tight clothing.
4. Observe the person for any changes in appearance or behavior.
5. Be prepared to give CPR if the person stops breathing.

A person in cardiac arrest has the best chance of survival when a sequence of events called the *cardiac chain of survival* occurs. The following are steps in the cardiac chain of survival:

1. early access to emergency medical services
2. early CPR
3. early defibrillation
4. early advanced medical care

Trained volunteers at the scene of any emergency can complete the first two steps in this chain by calling 911 and immediately beginning CPR. Follow these basic steps to perform CPR:

1. Make sure the person is lying on his or her back on a firm surface.
2. Place the heel of your hand in the center of the chest, over the sternum. Place your other hand on top of the first hand.
3. Push down on the sternum and release up in a steady rhythm. Deliver 30 of these compressions in about 18 to 20 seconds.
4. Open the airway and give two rescue breaths.
5. Continue cycles of 30 compressions and two breaths until emergency medical services (EMS) arrive or until an AED becomes available.
6. If you observe signs of life, stop CPR, continue to monitor the person's breathing, and look for any changes in the person's condition until EMS arrives.

Children and infants are more likely to have a breathing emergency that leads to a cardiac emergency. Car accidents, drowning, smoke inhalation, poisoning, airway obstruction, and falls are common causes of respiratory emergencies that can lead to cardiac arrest in a child. CPR procedures vary when the victim is a child or infant.