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Advice for first aiders-Sourced from St Johns Ambulance

**Consideration and advice for First Aiders and CPR during COVID-19**

# Consideration and advice for First Aiders and CPR during COVID-19

### Advice for first aiders-Sourced from St Johns Ambulance

As a first aider, in addition to high quality clinical skills, to be effective you need to:

1. Be aware of the risks to yourself and others
2. Keep yourself safe
3. Give early treatment
4. Keep yourself informed and updated
5. Remember your own needs

In the current climate with the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic, these skills become even more important and here is how you can apply these skills when managing a first aid incident.

### St Johns Ambulance guidance

### 1. Be aware of the risks to yourself and others

When approaching a casualty there is always a risk of cross contamination – especially when you may have to get close to the casualty to assess what is wrong or to check their breathing. It is always important to be aware of the risks of how this cross contamination has occurred. According to NHS 111 we do not know exactly how coronavirus spreads from person to person, but similar viruses are spread in cough droplets.

### 2. Keep yourself safe

In line with government advice, make sure you wash your hands or use an alcohol gel, before and after treating a casualty also ensure that you don’t cough or sneeze over a casualty when you are treating them.

The Resuscitation Council (UK) provides some useful advice of how to keep yourself safe when providing CPR (This is included further below)

* Don’t lose sight of other cross contamination that could occur that isn’t related to COVID-19.
* Wear gloves or cover hands when dealing with open wounds
* Cover cuts and grazes on your hands with waterproof dressing
* Dispose of all waste safely
* Do not touch a wound with your bare hand
* Do not touch any part of a dressing that will come into contact with a wound.

### 3. Give early treatment

The vast majority of incidents do not involve you getting close to a casualty where you would come into contact with cough droplets. Sensible precautions will ensure you are able to treat a casualty effectively.

### 4. Keep yourself informed and updated

As this is a new disease this is an ever-changing situation and the government and NHS are continually updating their advice. Make sure that you regularly review the NHS 111 or Gov.uk website which has a specific section on Coronavirus.

* <https://111.nhs.uk/>
* <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
* <https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/>
* <https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/primary-healthcare/>

### 5. Remember your own needs

These are challenging and uncertain times for all. The COVID-19 outbreak has meant a lot of upheaval and worry for people. In order to help others, you will also need to look after your own needs. Make sure you take time to talk about your fears and concerns with someone you trust and to take out time to look after yourself.

Resuscitation Council UK Statement on COV19 in primary care settings can be found at the below link. There is also an infographic document that is very useful, link below.

<https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/primary-healthcare/>

<https://www.resus.org.uk/_resources/assets/attachment/full/0/36824.png>

Useful information on resuscitation in public settings might also prove essential, this can be found at the below link.

<https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/covid-19-resources-community/>

**Correct PPE is essential.** The Reference to support the Resuscitation Councils statements can be found at

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/878750/T2_poster_Recommended_PPE_for_primary__outpatient__community_and_social_care_by_setting.pdf>

**Please ensure that all staff members are familiar with PPE grades and requirements**

Until further guidance becomes available, you may need to modify your training if you suspect COV19 infection risk. Ventilations could be considered as a AGP thus needing level 3 PPE, see UK Resuscitation Council guidance for hospital settings [https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/covid-healthcare-resources/covid-19-cpr-and-resuscitation-in-non-acute-hospital-settings/](https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/in-hospital-settings/covid-19-cpr-and-resuscitation-in-non-acute-hospital-settings/)

### This statement is for anyone who is performing CPR/defibrillation in primary care settings (out of Hospital)

It is recognised that a sudden collapse may happen in many different situations in the primary or community care setting, and this precludes provision of specific guidance for every eventuality.

A HCW may encounter a patient who has had a cardiac arrest in a public place (i.e. without the benefit of resuscitative equipment or PPE). Under such circumstances they should follow guidance for members of the public, being aware of their professional obligations. Please refer to our [statement on COVID-19, CPR and resuscitation in first aid and community settings](https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/covid-community/) for more information.

AGP PPE is the safest option for HCWs when undertaking chest compressions and other resuscitation procedures on patients with suspected or confirmed COVID. However, it is recognised that this may not be achievable in a primary or community care setting depending on the availability or otherwise of PPE. In the absence of AGP PPE, non AGP PPE if available for clinical care, must be worn as a minimum for resuscitation events.

When it is difficult to ascertain whether a person may or may not have COVID-19, the HCW must decide how to act in the circumstance in which they find themselves.

In any situation when a person with suspected or confirmed COVID is/becomes unresponsive, it is important to minimise the risk of droplet transmission.

During your assessment:

* Look for signs of life and normal breathing. Do not listen or feel for breathing by placing your ear and cheek close to the person’s mouth
* Feel for a carotid pulse if trained to do so
* Shout for help early so potential helpers are aware of the situation. They should remain at a distance of >2 metres from the unresponsive person
* If a person is unresponsive and not breathing normally, call the ambulance service in accordance with local protocols
* When calling, state the risk of COVID-19 if appropriate
* If an AED is available nearby and/or if a helper can fetch the device, it should be collected immediately

### If you have level 3 PPE then a resuscitation attempt can be performed in accordance to your training including the use of ventilatory equipment and oxygen.

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### If you do not have level 3, risk assess. Do not perform ventilations and ensure you wear the highest grade PPE you have access to.

### Ensure you have read the information from the links above, especially is relation to PPE levels and procedures. The information is likely to change, ensure your keep up to date with guidance.

### Post event considerations

Follow local guidance for safely removing PPE to avoid self-contamination and dispose of it in clinical waste bags as per local guidelines. Hand hygiene has an important role in decreasing transmission. Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water; alternatively, alcohol hand rub is also effective.

* Dispose of, or clean, all equipment used during CPR following the manufacturer’s recommendations and local guidelines. Any work surfaces used for airway/resuscitation equipment will also need to be cleaned according to local guidelines.
* Debrief at the end of the resuscitation attempt with any staff present.
* Ensure appropriate documentation is completed and submitted to the relevant organisation/authority

### Paediatric advice

We are aware that paediatric cardiac arrest is likely to be caused by a respiratory problem, making ventilations crucial to the child’s chances of survival.

For out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, calling an ambulance and taking immediate action is vitally important. If a child is not breathing normally and no actions are taken, cardiac arrest will follow soon.

It is possible that the child/infant having an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest may be known to the rescuer. It is possible that doing rescue breaths will increase the risk of transmitting the COVID-19 virus, either to the rescuer or the child/infant. This may be mitigated by the use of airway adjuncts such as a face shield, pocket mask or bag-mask device. However, this risk is small compared to the risk of taking no action as this will result in certain cardiac arrest and the death of the child.

### Further reading:

* Public Health Wales statement on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak:

<https://phw.nhs.wales/news/public-health-wales-statement-on-novel-coronavirus-outbreak/>

* Coronavirus (Covid-19) updates for Northern Ireland

[https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/coronavirus\](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/coronavirus)

* COVID-19: guidance for health professionals [Public Health England]:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus%C2%A0)

* Coronavirus (Covid-19) [Health Protection Scotland]:
* <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19>

### Managing First Aiders/First Aid at Work qualification(s) during COVID-19

If first aid cover for your practice is reduced because of coronavirus or you are unable to complete the first aid training you need, there are some things you can do so that you still comply with the law.

You should review your first aid needs assessment and decide if you can still provide the cover needed for the workers that are present. If there are fewer people coming into your workplace it may still be safe to operate with reduced first aid cover. You could also stop higher risk activities.

This assessment should be documented to include:

* The numbers present within the building/floor
* The type of tasks undertaken
* The level of training completed/valid
* The availability of First Aid boxes/kits available.

First aid boxes/kits should be checked to evidence their contents and expiry dates, and gloves, masks and hand sanitiser be made available next to each First Aid box/kit.

### Keep enough first aid cover

If you identify that there is insufficient cover you could share the first aiders of another business, but be sure that they have the knowledge, experience and availability to cover the first aid needs of your business.

Shared first aiders must:

* be aware of the type of injuries or illnesses that you identified in your first aid needs assessment
* have the training and skills to address them
* know enough about your work environment and its first aid facilities
* be able to get to the workplace in good time if needed

Whoever provides the temporary cover must make sure they do not adversely affect their own first aid cover.

### First aid certificate extensions

If you hold a first aid certificate that expires on or after 16 March 2020 and cannot access requalification training because of coronavirus you may qualify for a 3-month extension. This applies to:

* First Aid at Work (FAW)
* Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW) as well as
* Offshore Medic (OM)
* Offshore First Aid (OFA)

To qualify for the extension, you must be able to explain why you haven’t been able to requalify and demonstrate what steps you have taken to access the training.

### Interrupted first aid training

If because of coronavirus you cannot complete training for your first aid qualification within the usual timeframe, training can restart later as long as:

* a full recap of training delivered before the interruption is done before moving onto undelivered modules
* the awarding body is content that you can show:
  + a full understanding of all aspects of the course content
  + the knowledge required and competencies at the end of the training

### Interrupted first aid training

* <https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/i-need-to-know/Do-first-aid-kits-expire/>
* <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/first-aid-certificate-coronavirus.htm>

