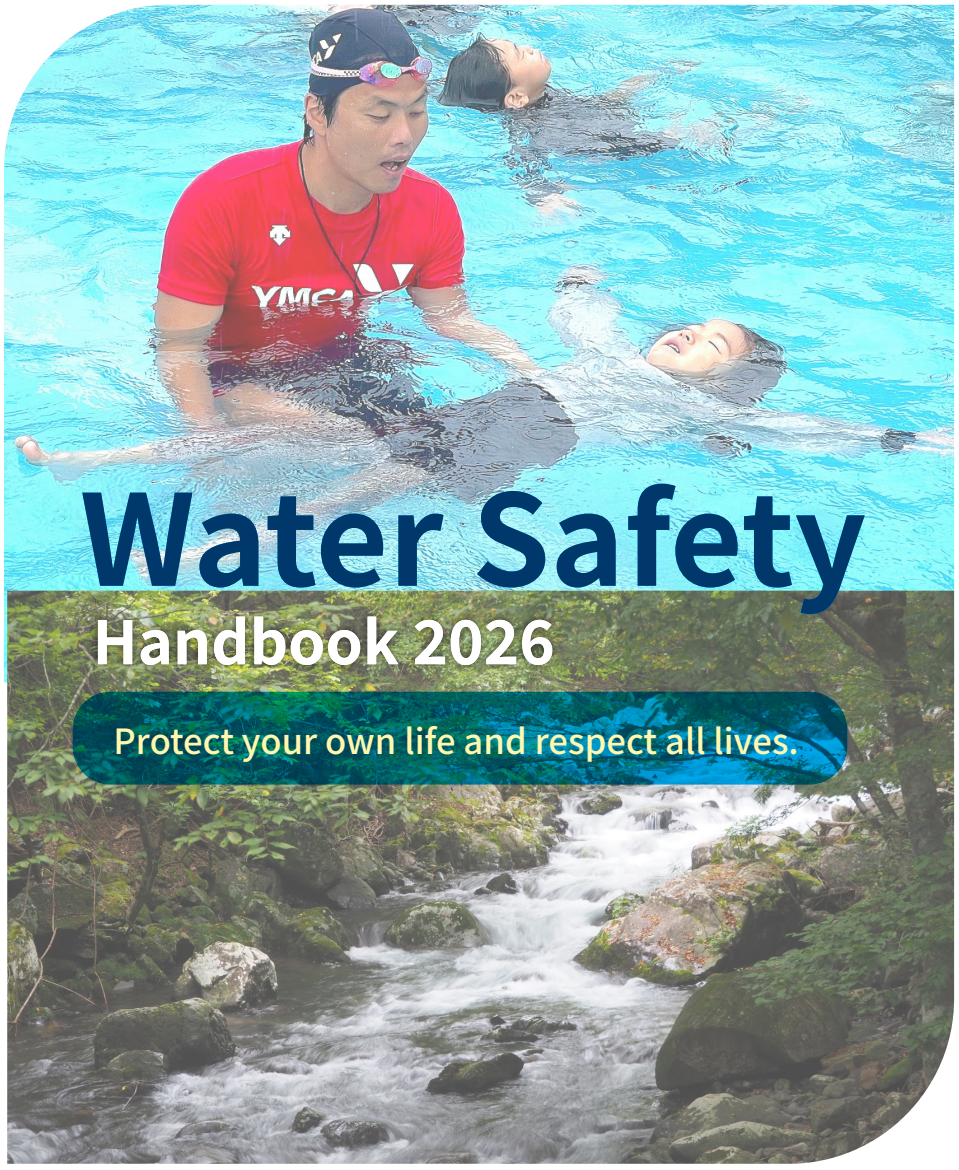
Encounter
Connect
Transform

YMCA



Water Safety

Handbook 2026

Protect your own life and respect all lives.

Name

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This handbook was created by YMCA Japan for water safety education in Japan.

Protect your own life and respect all lives.

Through water safety education, the YMCA Aquatic Program aims to protect and nurture the irreplaceable gift of life.
Children interact with water more and more as they grow. At the YMCA, we believe it is our mission to teach children how to protect themselves and prevent water-related accidents.

Established in Tokyo in 1880, the Japan YMCA now operates more than 200 locations from Hokkaido to Okinawa, serving approx. 140,000 members.

Water Safety Campaign

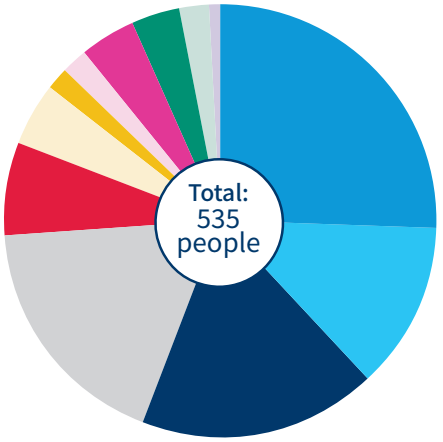
In preparation for the summer season when water-related accidents are most frequent, YMCAs around the country have held Water Safety Campaigns every year since 1981. The campaign teaches various methods to prevent and handle water-related accidents by distributing handbooks to local communities and conducting initiatives such as clothed swimming lessons at YMCA facilities and elementary schools across Japan.

Clothed swimming instruction, having children experience being in the water while fully clothed, helps participants understand the differences from swimming in a swimsuit, understand the difficulty of moving in water, and gain knowledge and skills necessary to prevent water accidents before they occur.
Additionally, YMCAs around the country observe "Water Safety Day" on June 1st at the start of the campaign as an opportunity to reflect together on water safety.

Click here for more information about the Water Safety Campaign
(Also check the answers to the Water Safety Quiz!)

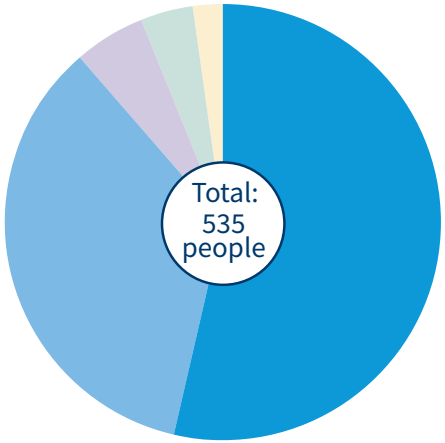
Water-related accidents often occur at these times and locations:

Drowning Incidents by Activity (Summer)



Playing in water	25.61%
Swimming	12.52%
Fishing	17.94%
Other/unknown	17.94%
Boating	6.92%
While passing by	4.67%
During water rescue	1.68%
Surfing	2.06%
Snorkeling	4.11%
While working	3.74%
Scuba diving	2.06%
During land-based sport	0.75%

Incidents by Location (Summer)



Oceans	53.83%
Rivers	34.95%
Lakes and ponds	5.23%
Irrigation canals	3.93%
Pools	2.06%

(Including household locations such as bathtubs and washing machines)

(Source: 2025 National Police Agency data)

Water Safety Quiz (Part 1)

1. What special day is June 1st?
2. During what kind of activity are water-related accidents most likely to occur?

Scan the QR code on page 1 for the quiz answers and a request to parents!

Do you do any of these dangerous activities?

At the ocean:

People often go to the beach or to nearby rivers in summer to play in the water. However, unlike on land, even a moment of carelessness in water could lead to injury or even death. Why do you think the children in this picture are in danger?

The emergency number for incidents and accidents at sea is
118 (Japan Coast Guard)

① Swimming out to sea

② Children riding in a boat alone

③ Playing in water where your feet can't touch the bottom

④ Playing near river mouths
*Check page 5 for locations and activities that are dangerous around rivers

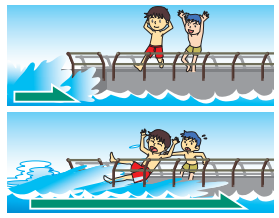
⑤ Going far from supervising adults

Rip Currents

Currents that push water from the shore out to sea

Undertow

Currents generated after a wave that flow along the seabed back out to sea.



Tides

Natural rising and falling of sea levels

Natural Disasters

Avoid going near water when there is a possibility of lightning, typhoons, earthquakes, or other natural disasters.

Please check if there are any active advisories or warnings in your area and the location of your nearest evacuation sites.

At the pool:

① Jumping into the water

② Not returning equipment after use

③ Running near the pool

④ Holding a floating object while in water too deep to stand in

⑤ Roughhousing in the water

⑥ Swimming with a fever

⑦ Diving and playing under platforms

Water Safety Quiz (Part 2)

1. If an accident occurs at sea, what number should you call?
2. When should you avoid going near water?
3. In the pool illustration, how many children are doing something dangerous?

Scan the QR code on page 1 for the quiz answers and a request to parents!

In a river:

① Being near water downstream of a localized downpour or thunderstorm

② Playing in areas with overgrown grass along the riverbank

遊泳禁止
No Swimming

Do not swim in areas where swimming is prohibited or when a swimming ban is in effect

③ Chasing after items swept away by the river

④ Playing on or near large rocks, or playing barefoot

Health Checklist

- ☐ Do you have a fever?
- ☐ Do you have a cold?
- ☐ Are you tired?
- ☐ Do you have an appetite?
- ☐ Is your complexion normal?
- ☐ Do you have any eye/ear issues?
- ☐ Are you getting enough sleep?

Performing a health check before playing in water is a good habit to prevent getting sick.

Sudden Rises in Water Level

Weather and other water releases can make water murky or full of debris, often leading to flooding or submersion.

⑤ Playing in sandbars, rapids, or areas where the river bottom isn't visible

⑥ Playing near man-made structures such as concrete breakwater blocks

Eddy Currents

A phenomenon in which water flows in the opposite direction of the current in a vortex-like pattern just downstream of rocks and other obstacles.

Fallen Trees

Fallen trees and large debris caused by heavy rains and strong winds are dangerous.

How To: Put On a Life Jacket

A life jacket is a flotation device that keeps your body from sinking when you enter the ocean, rivers, or any other bodies of water. Even after putting on a life jacket, be sure to follow the rules and perform thorough safety checks. Parents and guardians must check each child's life jacket to ensure it is on correctly before any activities begin.

1 Wear

Wear a life jacket that fits your body type and size. Life jackets usually come in three sizes: “adult” for adults and either “toddler” or “child” sizes for children. Solid-foam life jackets are best for activities where you are constantly in the water.

2 Tighten

Zip up the life jacket and use the side straps to ensure it fits snugly. Since life jackets rarely fit children perfectly, make sure to fasten the crotch strap securely. This is especially important when swimming in river currents or deep ocean waters.

3 Check it is snug

Pull the life jacket up and down to check if it moves out of place. If it does move out of place, tighten the straps more.

How To: Make a Distress Signal (when lifeguards are present)

Wave one arm widely from side to side to signal lifeguards or others for help when you are at the beach or other swimming areas.

This is only possible if you are wearing a life jacket or holding a flotation device, as someone in trouble would sink if they tried waving their arm.

(It is important that parents and guardians keep a close eye on their children and only allow them to play in areas with lifeguards.)

Water Safety Quiz (Part 3)

1. How many children are doing something dangerous in this illustration of a river?
2. How many key points are there for putting on a life jacket correctly?
3. Why should you perform a health check before playing in the water?

Scan the QR code on page 1 for the quiz answers and a request to parents!

If You See Someone Drowning...

Do not enter the water to rescue someone.

What to do if you see someone drowning or who accidentally falls into the water:

1. Call 119 (Japan emergency services)

If you are able to call emergency services, follow their instructions. If you can't contact emergency services, look for someone who can. (Notify someone who has a cellphone.)

What you can do before the ambulance arrives:

2. Throw an object that floats

If you have an item that floats, throw it toward the person's midsection and tell them to grab it.

Things that float: Plastic bottles, backpacks, shoes, balls, plastic bags
Think about what other kinds of objects you could use.

Water Safety Quiz (Part 4)

1. What number should you call when you spot a drowning person?
2. What can you do before the ambulance arrives?
3. Why shouldn't children try to rescue someone on their own?

Scan the QR code on page 1 for the quiz answers and a request to parents!

How Adults Can Help

NEVER GET IN THE WATER!!

Entering the water can lead to secondary accidents and greatly increase the risk of death. (Cases where rescuers are harmed after entering the water)

What can adults do without entering the water?

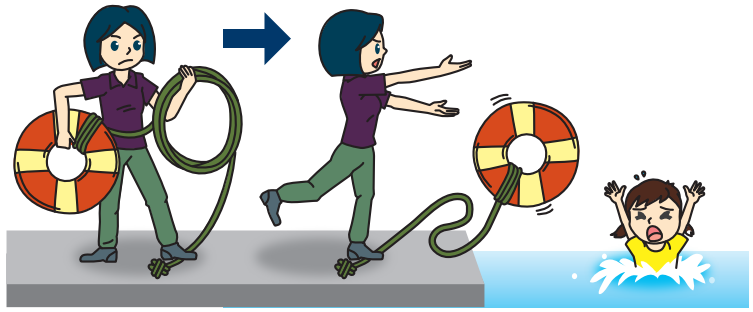
1. If no rescue equipment is nearby:

Lie face-down on the shore and reach out to pull the person toward you while being careful not to be pulled in yourself. If you can't reach them, find a sufficiently long rope, stick or pole, or create a makeshift rope by tying your clothes together (e.g., shirt, pants, belt).

Once you have something to use, extend it to the drowning person from the shore and use it to pull them toward you.

2. If rescue equipment is nearby:

Quickly tie a rope to a flotation device to create a rescue line, and firmly step on the end to hold it down. Throw the flotation device underhanded so that it lands behind the drowning person. Once the drowning person firmly grasps the flotation device, pick up the end of the rope under your foot and pull them toward you.



Float made from plastic bottles

What to do if you fall in the water:

The most important thing is to stay calm.
Even strong swimmers can drown or go into cardiac arrest if they panic.

Stay calm and assume a floating position

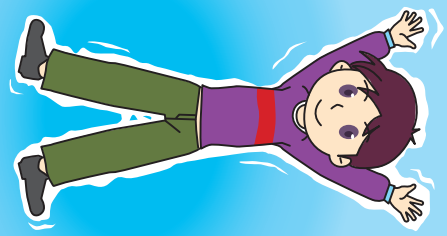
- If the shore is far away or hard to reach → Float and wait. If you have something that floats, hold it to your chest.
- If the shore is close and easy to reach → Swim back to shore

If you fall into the water, stay calm and assume a floating position

The golden rule is: "Float and wait!"

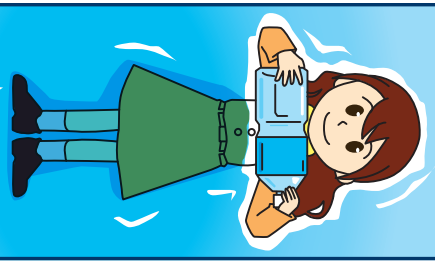
Most water accidents occur less than 3 meters from shore. This is because most people panic after accidentally falling into the water and are unable to return to shore, even if they want to. If you accidentally fall into the water, do not rush to return to shore. Instead, stay calm and assume a floating position on your back (back float). Do not take off your clothes or shoes as they will help you stay afloat.

1 Float on your back



2 Hold something that floats to your chest

(If you aren't wearing shoes, hold the object against your stomach)



Proper Floating Tips:

- Lift your stomach
- Extend your arms and legs
- Relax your entire body
- Keep the back of your head in the water

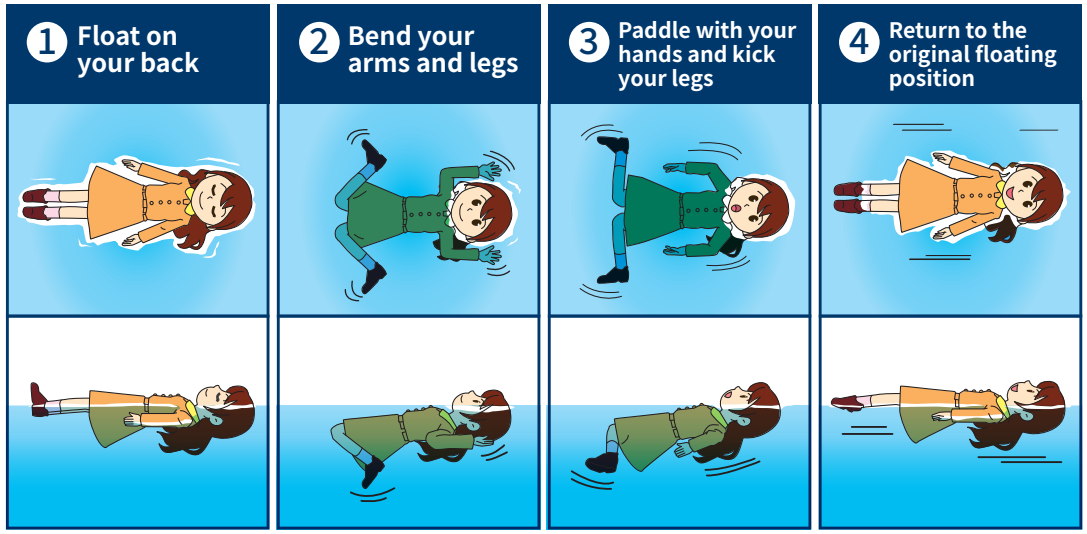
Water Safety Quiz (Part 5)

1. Why is it important to "float and wait?"
2. Is it easier to float when you are wearing clothes or wearing a bathing suit?

Scan the QR code on page 1 for the quiz answers and a request to parents!

How To: Elementary Backstroke

Elementary backstroke is well-suited to swimming with clothes on because it is easy to breathe, and you can continue for a long time without tiring. (Despite its efficiency, it is rather impractical in the ocean and rivers)

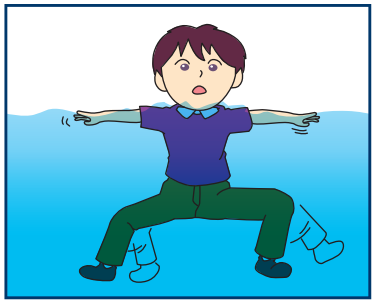


Extra Face-up Breaststroke

In case of a water-related accident, this method will allow you to swim while checking what is in front of you. This means you can assess the situation, protect yourself, and do what is necessary to get to safety.

Treading Water

This technique allows you to keep your head above water while your body is in a vertical position, and it can be used to move or remain stationary. If done correctly, you can maintain your breathing, keep your vision clear, and signal for help even in deep water where you can't touch the bottom.



If you find someone collapsed...

Stay calm and follow the steps below in accordance with the person's condition.
Even one person's brave actions can potentially save a life.

First, you must ensure your own safety. Confirm the surrounding area is safe before attempting to help.

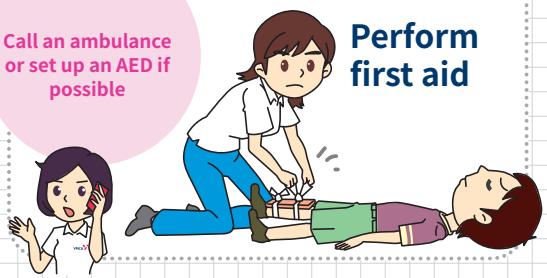
1 Check whether they are responsive

Gently tap the person's shoulders while talking into their ear in a loud voice (call their name if you know it).

Responsive

Call an ambulance or set up an AED if possible

Perform first aid

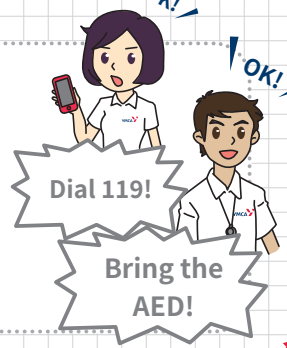


Unresponsive

If you don't know what to do

Ambulance
Call an ambulance.

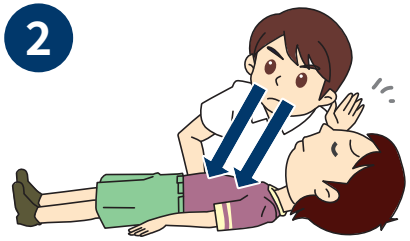
Call for help in a loud voice.



If you don't know what to do

2 Check for breathing

Not breathing



Check whether the injured person is breathing normally or not.

Watch for 10 seconds to see if the person's chest or stomach rises/falls.

Key Points

Their breathing is not normal if you observe any of the following:

- The chest and stomach are not moving
- You can't tell if they're breathing after watching for 10 seconds
- You observe gasping or intermittent breathing

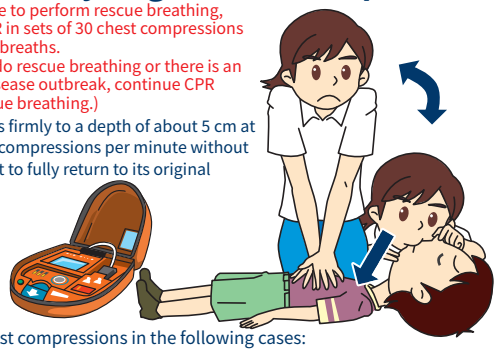
If unsure, start chest compressions immediately.

3 Immediately begin chest compressions

If you are able to perform rescue breathing, continue CPR in sets of 30 chest compressions and 2 rescue breaths.
(If you can't do rescue breathing or there is an infectious disease outbreak, continue CPR without rescue breathing.)

■ Perform compressions firmly to a depth of about 5 cm at a quick pace of 100–120 compressions per minute without stopping. Allow the chest to fully return to its original position between each compression.

■ Set up the AED as soon as it arrives.



■ Stop performing chest compressions in the following cases:
1. The person moans or begins breathing normally while you are performing chest compressions
2. When the emergency medical team arrives and takes over for you

If breathing is normal

Recovery Position

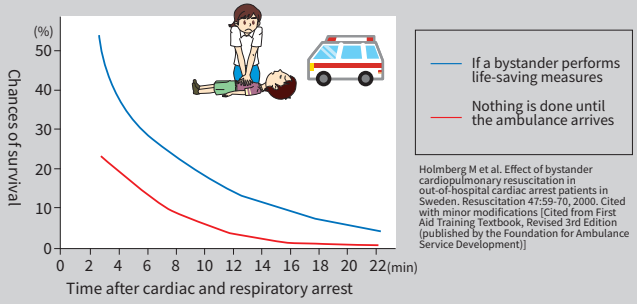
If they are unresponsive but breathing normally, position the person on their side, bend their upper leg and arm in front of them, and extend their chin to prevent choking.

Monitor the person while waiting for the ambulance.

If breathing is normal

First Aid & the Survival Curve

Chances of survival decrease over time.
First aid increases the chances of survival.

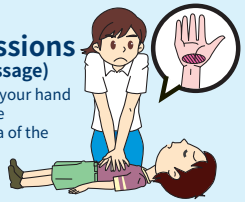


Holmberg M et al. Effect of bystander cardiopulmonary resuscitation in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest patients in Sweden. Resuscitation 47:59-70, 2000. Cited with minor modifications [Cited from First Aid Training Textbook, Revised 3rd Edition (published by the Foundation for Ambulance Service Development)]

Circulation

Chest Compressions (Cardiac Massage)

Use the heel of your hand to compress the designated area of the sternum.



30 chest compressions

Strong (5cm deep), fast (100-120 times/min), and uninterrupted.

Repeat in sets of 30 compressions and 2 breaths

Airway/Breathing

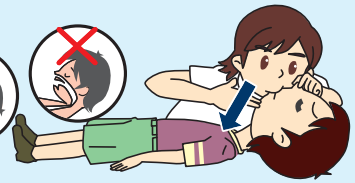
Airway Management & Rescue Breathing

A person's tongue can block their throat when they lose consciousness so it is vital to open their airway to prevent suffocation.

To open the airway, place one hand on the forehead to gently tilt their head back and use the index and middle fingers of your other hand to lift the chin.

Perform rescue breathing if you can, but you may perform chest compressions only if you are unable to do rescue breathing or there is an infectious disease outbreak.

Cover the person's mouth with your own, pinch their nose, and blow air into their mouth for about one second, just enough to make their chest rise slightly. Repeat this again.



Once the AED is ready, turn it on and follow the voice prompts to deliver an electric shock.

How to save a life: Basic Life Support (BLS) Procedures (Based on 2020 Guidelines)

Basic Life Support (BLS) refers to procedures such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (chest compressions and rescue breathing) and AED defibrillation that may save people whose heart and breathing have stopped. If the person isn't breathing normally and doesn't respond to your voice, their life is in immediate danger.
Take the following actions immediately:

1. Call for help... Have someone call 119 and bring an AED
2. Perform CPR

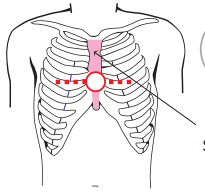
Make sure you know where AEDs are located at all times.

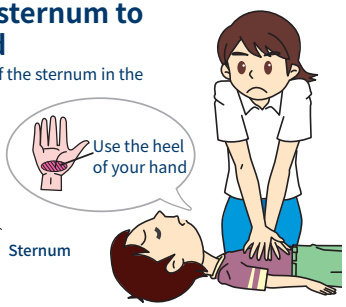
If you find an unresponsive injured person who isn't breathing normally

Method #1: Chest Compressions

Compress the sternum to circulate blood

Compress the lower half of the sternum in the center of the chest





For infants

Using your middle and ring fingers to apply pressure to the bottom half of the sternum in the middle of the chest until the chest depresses by about one-third of its thickness.

For toddlers

Compress the bottom half of the sternum just below the center of the chest to a depth roughly equivalent to one-third of the chest's thickness. Compress with one hand or both hands, depending on the child's size.

(Use either one or two hands as required to apply enough pressure for the child's size.)

Perform chest compressions on the lower half of the sternum in the center of the chest. Keep your elbows straight and lean forward to apply force perpendicular to the sternum. It is important to allow the chest to return to its original height between compressions by fully removing pressure. (Figure 1)

Important points:

- Press on the lower sternum in the center of the chest.
- Compress the chest by about 5 cm. Do not compress more than 6 cm.
- Be quick (100–120 compressions/minute).
- Minimize breaks between chest compressions.
- Allow the chest to fully return to its original position after each compression.

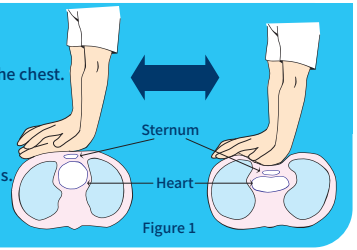


Figure 1

Method #2: Rescue Breathing

Perform mouth-to-mouth to assist breathing

Perform rescue breathing if you can, but you may perform chest compressions only if you are unable to do rescue breathing or there is an infectious disease outbreak.

Airway Management

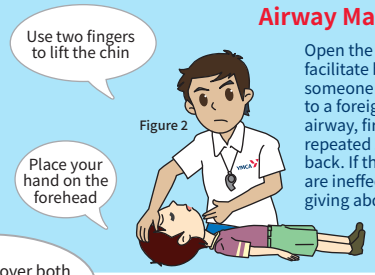


Figure 2

Open the airway to facilitate breathing. If someone is choking due to a foreign object in the airway, first make repeated strikes to their back. If the back blows are ineffective, begin giving abdominal thrusts.

Artificial respiration

After securing the airway, blow two rescue breaths, each of which should be about one second long, and make the chest rise. For infants, perform "mouth-to-nose-and-mouth rescue breathing" by covering both the infant's nose and mouth with your mouth.

Secure the airway (Figure 2) by lifting the chin upward to widen the air passage and perform rescue breaths. Pinch the nose shut and blow two continuous deep breaths (while securing the airway) as you watch to confirm their chest rises. If mouth-to-mouth contact could pose a risk of viral infection or other dangers, omit rescue breaths and continue with chest compressions only.

Important points for mouth-to-mouth resuscitation

- Breathe until you see the chest rise
- Each breath should be one second long
- Give two consecutive rescue breaths
- If you can't tell if they are breathing, begin chest compressions immediately

30 chest compressions
2 rescue breaths
} Repeat

(If doing CPR on a child and there are 2 rescuers, do 15 compressions and 2 breaths)

Parents and guardians:

If the child does not respond when called and is not breathing normally, their life is in immediate danger. You must begin first aid immediately, including chest compressions and rescue breathing. It is also crucial to initiate CPR as soon as possible and continue without interruption until medical personnel take over.
You never know how or when your children or family may have an accident. As a parent, we recommend that you take a first aid training course so that you may perform CPR quickly and effectively.

When calling 119, do not hang up. Stay on the line and follow the operator's instructions.

Using an AED (Automated External Defibrillator)

If the injured person isn't breathing normally, their heart may be undergoing ventricular fibrillation, a condition where the heart quivers rapidly. In this case, they will need an electric shock (defibrillation) to restore the heart's natural rhythm. It is vital to perform CPR in conjunction with the AED.

1. Turn on the power

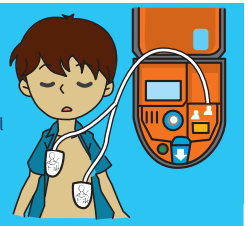
After turning on the power, follow the AED's instructions by checking the voice prompts and the flashing lights.

2. Apply the electrode pads

Take out the AED and electrode pads from the pouch and remove any clothing covering the person's chest. Place one electrode pad on the upper right side of the chest (below the collarbone) and the other on the lower left side of the chest (5–8 cm below the armpit).

When using the pads:

- Ensure the pads are firmly pressed against the skin
- If the skin is wet, wipe it with a towel before applying the pads
- For children (under 6 years old), use the pediatric pads



(If pediatric electrode pads are not available, use the child/adult electrode pads instead and place them on the chest and back so they don't touch each other but are on either side of the child's heart.)

3. ECG Analysis

The AED will begin giving voice prompts and automatically begin ECG analysis on the injured person. Do not touch the injured person.

4. AED Electric Shock and CPR

If it says an electric shock is required, press the shock button when the AED's voice instruction tells you to do so. Do not touch the injured person.

5. Repeat CPR and use the AED again

Resume CPR when the AED's voice prompts tell you to do so. When the AED is conducting ECG analysis or delivering an electric shock, do not touch the person.
Keep the AED's electrode pads attached to the person and plugged into the machine as you resume CPR.