

First Aid for Unconscious Person

Last updated: August 9, 2022



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Prolonged unconsciousness can cause severe complications. If left untreated, lack of oxygen supply to the brain may cause brain damage, and choking can even lead to death. There is also risk of injury when performing CPR, such as broken ribs, but it is important to attempt CPR and call for medical assistance as soon as possible.

Unconsciousness is a medical emergency where patient outcomes are optimized by early diagnosis and physiological stability. Such patients usually require a checkup by a medical professional or a physician because such a condition is time-sensitive, hard to manage, and requires a systematic.¹

The first thing to do when someone appears to be unresponsive or unconscious is to ask them if they are okay in a loud voice, then shake them gently provided the victim does not appear to have a spinal injury. If after all these steps they do not respond then check if the person:

- Has any signs of blockage in the airway.
- Is breathing.
- Has a pulse or heartbeat.

If the person does not appear to breathe or if they have a weak or no pulse then have someone call 911. The steps for the first aid are decided on the basis of one question "Is the person breathing?"²

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If the person is breathing:

If the person is breathing, seems to be dazed, and is not unconscious then ask them basic questions like their name, date of birth, or that day's date. The patient may be facing a change in mental status if they are unable to answer or give a wrong answer.

If the person seems to have a spinal injury then try to keep the neck of the person supported and still and do not move them. Share all the information with emergency medical services.

If the person is not breathing:

If the person is unconscious and is not breathing then it is important to move them onto their back carefully while protecting their neck, so that the person can receive [cardiopulmonary resuscitation](#) (CPR). Signs like breathing, moving, or coughing are great signs, but in the absence of these signs, CPR must be continued until emergency medical service providers arrive.

The frequency of complications and the consequent risks of CPR performed by a bystander on a victim are very low. If the victim seems to have inadequate respiration, it is reasonable to perform CPR promptly and confidently³.

Assessment through look, listen and feel method was removed from the BLS algorithm in 2010, this was because these steps were inconsistent and time-consuming. Instead, the emergency response system must be activated while starting chest compressions for a person who is not breathing or who is gasping (Bauer et al., 2022)⁴.

Temporary unconsciousness:

Fainting and syncope can cause a sudden and temporary unconsciousness. The most common form of fainting is Neurally mediated syncope (NMS). It is mostly harmless and does not require any medical treatment. This condition occurs when something unpleasant or shocking happens, or when the brain does not respond correctly to a trigger. The incorrect response causes the person to pass out by cutting the oxygen flow to the brain.

Dehydration, low blood sugar or low blood pressure, heart problems, and hyperventilation also cause temporary unconsciousness.

Things to avoid:

The following things must be avoided while providing first aid to an unconscious person.

- Do not try to make them drink water or any other liquid.
- Do not try to make the victim sit up.
- Do not splash water on an unconscious person or shake them.
- Do not place something under the head of an unconscious person as it may disrupt their breathing.
- If an object is lodged in a person's throat, keep performing CPR and check the mouth for foreign objects before providing rescue breaths.
- Do not leave them alone or unattended.

A good immediate step to help an unconscious person is to administer first aid, however, it cannot be ignored that it is very crucial to provide them with medical attention. The sooner the

person will receive medical emergency attention the fewer would be the complications.

Conclusion:

Unconsciousness is a state when a person is unable to respond to different stimuli, people, and activities. It is essential for the bystander or the person to know what to do while providing first aid to the unconscious person. Simple steps include checking the victim's vitals, and signs of any serious injury and calling the emergency services to help. If the person is not breathing then it is necessary to provide CPR to that person. See our [CPR page](#) for more information.

All the information about the victim must be shared with the emergency service providers and the person must be sent to a hospital as soon as possible to lessen or avoid the chances of complications.

Resources:

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6330912/>
- <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322872>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3299150/>
- Bauer, Z. A., Jesus, O. D., & Bunin, J. L. (2022, January). Unconscious patient - statpearls - NCBI bookshelf. Retrieved August 9, 2022, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK538529/>



This page was last reviewed and updated by [Jessica Munoz](#) on Jun 10, 2021.



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