

Learn two-step method of CPR to save lives

12 June 2012, By Marilyn Ann Yates

"Anyone can learn CPR - and everyone should!" proclaims the American Heart Association on its website.

Because 70 percent of Americans do not know how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the American Heart Association is encouraging everyone to learn Hands-Only CPR during the first week of June, National CPR and AED Awareness Week.

We chatted with representatives from the AHA recently to find out more about what to do if we ever witnessed someone collapse and go into [sudden cardiac arrest](#).

Hands-Only CPR is performed with [chest compressions](#) but without the mouth-to-mouth breathing done in conventional CPR. In recent years, the American Heart Association has simplified the procedure to two steps. When you see an adult suddenly collapse who is not breathing normally:

1. Call 9-1-1
2. Push hard and fast in the center of the chest at the rate of 100 pumps per minute (like the beat of the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive" song)

Begin CPR as soon as possible after the sudden [cardiac arrest](#) because the risk of [permanent damage](#) to the victim is greater after four minutes. Continue CPR until an [automated external defibrillator](#) (AED) or emergency worker arrives.

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of Americans. And more than 1,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur every day in the U.S., says Dr. Sreenivas Gudimetla, president of the board of directors for the Tarrant County American Heart Association. More than 80 percent of those cardiac arrests happen at home, so the most likely person you will give CPR to is someone you love, says Gudimetla, who is also a [cardiologist](#) at Texas Health Harris Methodist Fort Worth Hospital.

Most people worry that they might do something wrong helping an adult who has a sudden cardiac arrest, so only 32 percent of victims get CPR from a [bystander](#), which leads to unnecessary deaths. Learning Hands-Only CPR gives people the confidence to act quickly to help a loved one or a stranger in an emergency and increase their survival rates, the AHA says.

If more people learn CPR, the chance that someone can help an adult who suddenly collapses increases. Kathryn Bashaw, communications director for the American Heart Association in Tarrant County, Texas, says the AHA is asking Texas legislators to consider CPR training as a high school graduation requirement so our next generation will be prepared to save even more lives.

Only 5.2 percent of people who have a cardiac arrest outside of a hospital survive, says the AHA. That number increases to 8 percent when mouth-to-mouth CPR is given. But when a person administers Hands-Only CPR, the victim's chance of survival doubles, Gudimetla says.

Hands-Only CPR with just chest compressions is as effective as CPR with breaths in helping adult victims of cardiac arrest, says the American Heart Association. And the two-step method is easier to remember than the traditional method of chest compressions combined with breathing.

People hesitant to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to strangers are more likely to administer just chest compressions. Gudimetla says our breaths contain carbon dioxide when we exhale, which is not as beneficial to the victim as chest compressions. When an adult in sudden cardiac arrest collapses, his lungs and blood still contain oxygen. Chest compressions help to pump this oxygenated blood to the brain and the heart.

So the best thing a bystander can do for a cardiac arrest victim is to give high-quality chest compressions with minimal interruptions until

medical services personnel arrive.

If you are one of the 70 percent of Americans who don't know CPR, here are ways to learn:

Watch a video: See a one-minute video on how to perform Hands-Only CPR at handsonlycpr.org. Studies show that people who watch this video are more willing to administer CPR during an emergency. Go to www.heart.org/cpr, then choose Community Training/National CPR and AED Awareness Week to see Hands-Only CPR in action to the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive."

Order a CPR kit: The CPR Anytime Kit uses the American Heart Association's "practice while watching" technique. Users watch an instructional DVD while practicing CPR on a mannequin. This 22-minute training kit can be used by individuals in their homes and shared with family and friends. Schools, community groups and workplaces can complete the training in large groups. Order the kit at cpranytime.org.

Download an app: Go to handsonlycpr.org to download the American Heart Association's free app for your smartphone.

Take a class: Find an instructor-led class by date or location at www.heart.org/cpr. Or call 1-877-AHA-4CPR (877-242-4277).

Play interactive games: The [American Heart Association](http://AmericanHeartAssociation.org) has a Be the Beat interactive website with games, videos and a playlist of 100-beat-per-minute songs to help teens learn how to be a lifesaver. Check out bethebeat.heart.org.

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