

Waiting for an Ambulance

What should you do whilst waiting for | Emma Hammett
an ambulance?



What should you do whilst waiting for an ambulance?



If you are first on the scene and find someone who has collapsed or had an accident, what you do in those first minutes is critical.

Most ambulances aim to get to a life-threatening emergency within eight minutes. However, a lot can happen in 8 minutes and the first aid you give whilst waiting for the ambulance could mean the difference between life and death. At the moment the NHS is under increasing strain and the UK's ambulance service is under more pressure than ever. The [London Ambulance Service](#) is currently receiving up to 8,000 emergency calls a day.

Here we outline the **vital first aid response** that could help keep someone alive until the ambulance arrives.

First, take a deep breath to clear your head. Don't rush in, keep yourself and the casualty calm and get an overview of the situation. See if you can identify what the most serious problem is. The most obvious problem isn't always the most serious.

What should you do whilst waiting for an ambulance?

Ensure you and the casualty are **safe from further danger** and continually re-evaluate this. If you are in danger, make the situation safe (eg switch off a car engine etc)

Next, check for response. Speak to them and gently shake them to see if they're conscious.

No response from the casualty

Open the airway and check for breathing.

Treat the most life-threatening problems first, such as lack of breathing or catastrophic bleeding. You can check for broken bones and other injuries afterwards.

Casualty unconscious

If a person is **unconscious and breathing** and has no other life-threatening conditions – place in the recovery position to protect their airway.



If a person is **unconscious and NOT breathing normally** – **start CPR**. Phone an ambulance, put on speakerphone if you are on your own, and start CPR without delay.

What should you do whilst waiting for an ambulance?

CPR



30 chest compressions followed by 2 breaths and repeated. For a baby or child start with 5 breaths.

What should you do whilst waiting for an ambulance?



Covid-19 - revised CPR guidance for adult resuscitation

Recognise cardiac arrest by looking for the absence of signs of life and the absence of normal breathing. **Do not listen or feel for breathing by placing your ear and cheek close to the patient's mouth.** If you are in any doubt about confirming cardiac arrest, the default position is to **start chest compressions until help arrives.**



Make sure an ambulance is on its way. **If COVID 19 is suspected, tell them when you call 999.**



Early use of a **defibrillator (AED)** significantly increases the person's chances of survival and does not increase risk of infection.



If the rescuer has access to any form of personal protective equipment (PPE) this should be worn - **gloves and mask if possible.**



If there is a perceived risk of infection, rescuers should **place a cloth/towel over the victim's mouth and nose** and attempt **compression only CPR** and **early defibrillation** until the ambulance (or advanced care team) arrives. Put hands together in the middle of the chest and push hard and fast.



After performing compression-only CPR, all rescuers should **wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water**; **alcohol-based hand gel** is a convenient alternative. They should also seek advice from the NHS 111 coronavirus advice service or medical adviser.



Resuscitation Council (UK)

www.firstaidforlife.org.uk

What should you do whilst waiting for an ambulance?

Casualty is conscious

If the person is conscious, control any bleeding with direct pressure and perform any other essential life-saving first aid as quickly as possible to stabilise their condition. Help the casualty to administer any medication if appropriate, for example GTN spray, asthma pump, EpiPen etc. prior to calling an ambulance. Keep them warm and dry. Stay calm and be as reassuring as possible.

Difficulty breathing

If the casualty is struggling to breathe, the best position for them to be in is sitting down in an upright position.

Try and establish why they are having difficulty and if they have any medication to help – are they asthmatic? Could they be having an acute allergic reaction? If so help them administer their medication straight away.

If their condition worsens, phone the ambulance service again and update them.

Possible Heart Attack

If they are showing signs of a heart attack sit them down in an upright position, preferably a lazy W. Encourage them to take their GTN spray if they have one. If they do not feel better and have been prescribed a 300mg Aspirin they should chew this. Phone the emergency services and stress that it is urgent. If they become unconscious and stop breathing, start CPR and if possible, get someone to bring the defibrillator quickly. Get someone to update the ambulance service that your casualty has deteriorated and is now an even higher priority.

Possible Stroke

If someone is showing signs of a stroke, they need to get to a stroke unit as quickly as possible. If the ambulance is delayed and you feel safe transporting them, take them there yourself. It is of critical importance that they are swiftly assessed as if they have a blood clot and are treated quickly enough (within a few hours) it is possible to reverse the damage. Continue to reassure the casualty and keep them warm and dry.

What should you do whilst waiting for an ambulance?

Possible Spinal Injury

If they are conscious and you are concerned that they may have damaged their spine, get them to stay still and explain how important it is that they avoid twisting their back or neck. You can help them to remain still by lying behind their head, supporting the head and neck with your hands in the neutral position. If they are unconscious and breathing, (even if you are worried about their spine), if you are concerned about their airway, you should try and get help to very carefully log roll them into the recovery position, protecting their neck and back to avoid twisting.

About us

As a small business, we so value (and need) your support. Thank you so much for booking with us, if you have enjoyed your course, please recommend us to your friends. Thank you too for your lovely reviews, they make such a difference to us.

Award-winning first aid training tailored to your needs and importantly Covid secure. Please visit our site and learn more about our practical and online courses. It is vital to keep your skills current and refreshed.

It is strongly advised that you attend a fully regulated Practical or [Online First Aid course](#) to understand what to do in a medical emergency. Please visit <https://firstaidforlife.org.uk> or call 0208 675 4036 for more information about our courses.

First Aid for Life is a multi-award-winning, fully regulated first aid training provider. Our highly experienced medical, health and emergency services professional trainers tailor the training to your needs. Courses for groups or individuals at our venue or yours.

First Aid for life provides this information only for guidance. It is not in any way a substitute for medical advice. First Aid for Life is not responsible or liable for any diagnosis made, or actions taken based on this information.