

Did you know that sudden cardiac arrest is the one of the leading causes of death in the United States? Unfortunately, most people who suffer a cardiac arrest outside of a hospital do not get cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) from a bystander, which significantly lessens their chances of survival. CPR is easy to learn, and is taught to tens of thousands of people each year. Here are five great reasons to learn CPR:

1. CPR saves lives. More than 300,000 people suffer cardiac arrest in the United States every year. Sudden cardiac arrest occurs when an electrical rhythm problem occurs and the heart is no longer able to pump blood effectively to the rest of the body. You might see a person suddenly collapse, lose consciousness, and stop breathing. The longer the body goes without circulation, the lower the chance of survival. By performing CPR, you are able to help the person's blood keep circulating until an ambulance arrives and more advanced tools can be used. We know that the chance of surviving a sudden cardiac arrest increases significantly, by more than double, when CPR is started early.

2. CPR is not performed enough. Would you be surprised to learn that bystander CPR is done in less than half of all out-of-hospital cardiac arrests? National statistics have shown that only 15 to 30 percent of people who experience sudden cardiac arrests outside of hospitals receive bystander CPR. When people are asked why they would not give CPR, a very common answer is that they never received training. Other concerns, such as doing harm to the person, doing harm to oneself, legal risks, or concerns about infection, often diminish once people learn proper CPR techniques.

3. You don't have to do mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Another reason people report they do not perform CPR is because of concerns about performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. In 2010, the guidelines for performing CPR were changed; they now say that people who do not feel comfortable, or who have not received formal training, should attempt hands-only CPR. We advocate performing chest compressions even without breathing assistance. Hands-only CPR has been shown to be just as effective for many adults who experience sudden cardiac arrest.

4. Hands-only CPR is easy to learn. To perform hands-only CPR, place the heel of your hand on the center of the victim's chest. Take your other hand and place it on top of the first, interlacing your fingers. Press down on the chest about two inches and release. You want to repeat this quickly, at least 100 times a minute. And don't stop doing CPR until emergency services arrives at the scene! recent studies have found that people may have a better chance of surviving with normal brain function when CPR is continued up to 38 minutes or longer. The goal is to find the learning technique that works best for you so that you are comfortable if you are in a situation where you can save a life!

5. Most cardiac arrests occur in the home. More than 85 percent of cardiac arrests take place at home. Many lives have been saved because of CPR performed by a husband, wife, child, or friend. So take the challenge. If you don't know CPR, learn CPR and gain the confidence in knowing that if you are ever needed, you too can save a life!



The Bainbridge Island Fire Department teaches hands-on only CPR.

Sign-up for classes on line at: www.bifd.org