

COVID-19: Guidance for First Aiders

FIRST AIDERS PLEASE ALWAYS REMEMBER: The primary aims of First Aid are three-fold. **1. To Save Life** – your immediate actions could quite literally save the life of a work colleague and friend. **2. To Prevent the Condition (the injury) Worsening.** Your expertise gained during your First Aid training could be the difference between a full recovery from the injury or developing a life-long disability. **3. To Reassure the Casualty.** An injured person could be in severe shock, they will be in pain, they will possibly be afraid for their life. Your confidence will reassure them, as will your informing them (during their initial treatment) that further help is on the way. **Please remember your training as a First Aider in dealing with casualties. You might have to make decisions for both your safety and that of the casualty, decisions that could be the difference between life and death, for example whether to provide rescue breaths (sometimes called mouth-to-mouth resuscitation).** Unfortunately, there is conflicting advice for First Aiders on providing these rescue breaths during the COVID-19 Emergency. The British Red Cross state: “If you decide to perform rescue breaths on someone who is not breathing, use a resuscitation face shield where available” whereas St Johns Ambulance state: “Do not give rescue breaths.” Clearly, this is a decision the First Aider will have to take in the moment; a decision based on their training and the moral question as to whether they will or will not provide rescue breaths to a casualty who is not breathing.

Our First Aid Risk Assessment is for trained First Aiders treating others who are injured or unwell and possibly coming into close contact with potential carriers of COVID-19 (the Coronavirus). We do not want any trained First Aider to be reluctant to assist injured or unwell work colleagues (and possibly other persons) because of the risk to their health due to possible exposure to the Coronavirus. Your training, along with our Risk Assessment means we have very carefully considered the risk to your health due to exposure to the virus. By implementing the specified risk control measures you can be confident that the risk is manageable.

What is COVID – 19? COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called the Coronavirus or COVID-19. The virus is expelled as droplets from the respiratory tract of an infected individual (e.g. during coughing and sneezing) directly onto other susceptible individuals, e.g. those administering first aid, or on to workplace surfaces, which are then touched or handled. Typically, these droplets travel only short distances through the air. A distance of at least 1 metre has been used to decide on the precautions needed to protect First Aiders against expelled droplets.

Further advice from the government and medical experts is that a 2-metre distance (referred to as social distancing) must be followed at all times; so far as is reasonably practicable. We understand that whilst administering first aid to injured or unwell persons that this will not always be reasonably practicable. The following Risk Assessment is intended to address any First Aider being in very close proximity to any injured or unwell person (i.e. less than 2 metres) when applying first aid.

First Aid Assistance: If you need to administer first aid assistance during this current crisis then we must reduce the risk to your health; especially when treating any person who is in very close proximity. Those personnel who are involved in the treatment any injured or unwell person **must be kept to the absolute minimum needed to meet the primary aims of first aid** (as noted above). Should any injured person be able to self-treat e.g. use an eye wash bottle, or clean a wound and then self-apply adhesive plasters, then they should do so. Where assistance is required from a first aider the following additional precautionary measures will need to be taken.

COVID-19: Guidance for First Aiders

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for First Aiders: Disposable surgical gloves and FFP3 face mask, a disposable plastic apron and disposable eye protection (such as face visor or goggles) is mandatory for all personnel administering first aid. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and hot water before putting on and after taking off PPE. Use and dispose of all PPE according to site instructions and the training previously provided.

If you need to assist an injured or unwell person (who is also symptomatic of the Coronavirus) you must firstly isolate the person from others. If there is no physically separate room, instruct others (who are not involved in providing first aid) to stay clear (i.e. at least 2 metres away). If barriers or screens are available, these should be used.

CPR and Recue Breaths: Where possible, it is recommended that you do not perform rescue breaths (or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation). Perform chest compressions only. Whilst administering chest compressions the First Aider should place a towel or similar over the mouth of the casualty due to the likelihood that aerosols (droplets) could be expelled. Ultimately if a decision is **made** to perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation during cardiac arrest you should use a resuscitation face shield (if available). If you have given mouth-to-mouth resuscitation there are no additional actions to be taken other than to monitor yourself for the symptoms of COVID-19 over the next 14 days.

Hand Hygiene: After contact with the injured or unwell person, you should immediately and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and hot water (or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser). You should avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose until you have thoroughly cleansed your hands after contact with the injured or unwell person. There are no additional precautions to be taken in relation to cleaning your clothing / uniform other than what is usual practice.

Blood or bodily fluid spill? Keep other people clear. Use a spill-kit if available (using the PPE in the spill-kit) or use PPE provided by your employer. Follow the instructions provided with the spill-kit. If no spill-kit is available, place paper towels / paper roll over the spill area and seek further advice from emergency services when they arrive.

How to avoid catching or spreading germs: The “Do’s and Don’ts.” There are things you can do to help stop viruses like Coronavirus spreading.

DO

- 1. Wash your hands with soap and hot water often – do this for at least 20 seconds**
- 2. Always wash your hands when you get home or into work.**
- 3. Use a hand sanitizer if soap and hot water are not available.**
- 4. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) if you cough or sneeze.**
- 5. Put used tissues and hand wipes in the bin immediately after use and then wash your hands.**
- 6. Try to avoid unnecessary close contact with other people in the work environment.**

DO NOT touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands have not been thoroughly cleaned.