

Chapter 3. Introduction to First Aid Part 1. Principles of First Aid

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Part 1 • Principles of First Aid

(What every health-science student should know before touching an injured person)

1 Why Learn First Aid?

- **First minutes save lives.** Bleeding, blocked airways, and cardiac arrest can turn fatal in seconds to minutes.
- **Bridges the gap.** Trained responders or doctors may be 5–20 minutes away—first aid keeps the casualty alive and stable until then.
- **Adds value to every profession.** Whether you become a physiotherapist, nurse, or fitness coach, first-aid skills make you a safer practitioner and a more responsible citizen.

2 Aims and Objectives of First Aid

Think **3 P + 3 R**—easy to remember and covers everything.

Aim	Plain-Language Meaning	Typical Actions
P 1 - Preserve life	Keep the person alive and breathing.	Open airway, give rescue breaths or CPR, stop severe bleeding.
P 2 - Prevent further harm	Stop the situation or injury from getting worse.	Remove dangers (fire, traffic); stabilize fractures; do not move the spine unnecessarily.
P 3 - Promote recovery	Give simple care that speeds healing.	Clean and dress a wound, apply ice to reduce swelling, reassure to lower anxiety.
R 1 - Relieve pain	Reduce suffering while you wait for help.	Position of comfort, cold compress, gentle support of injured limb.
R 2 - Reassure the casualty	Keep them calm; panic worsens shock.	Speak clearly, explain what you are doing, stay at eye level.
R 3 - Refer or arrange transport	Get professional help as soon as possible.	Call EMS (dial 112 in India), guide ambulance, hand-over details to paramedics.

Key Rule: “Do the most good, do no further harm.”

Act only within your training level—nothing more, but never less.

3 The “DR A B C D” Action Plan

A universal mental checklist before any first-aid action.

1. **D - Danger:** Is the scene safe for you and the casualty?
2. **R - Response:** Tap shoulders, shout “Are you okay?”
3. **A - Airway:** Tilt head-lift chin (unless spinal injury) to clear airway.
4. **B - Breathing:** Look, listen, feel for normal breathing 10 s.
5. **C - Circulation:** If not breathing, start chest compressions 100–120 min⁻¹. Control major bleeding.
6. **D - Defibrillation / Doctor:** Attach AED if available; call professional help.



4 Legal Considerations in Providing First Aid

Topic	What It Means for You	Indian Context & Examples
Consent	Ask before touching if the person is conscious: “I am trained in first aid; can I help you?”	If unconscious, the law assumes “implied consent.”
Good Samaritan protection	Laws shield helpers acting in good faith from legal harassment.	Govt. of India (2016) Good Samaritan guidelines: you are not liable for hospital costs or court appearances if you provide reasonable aid.
Duty of care	Once you start, stay until a higher medical authority takes over or you are too exhausted.	For healthcare students, abandoning a casualty mid-care can be considered negligence.
Scope of practice	Give only the aid you are trained for; don’t attempt surgery or IV injections.	CPR, bleeding control, splinting are acceptable; administering prescription drugs is not .
Record & report	Note time of incident, what you observed, what you did—hand this to EMS.	Simple written note or smartphone voice memo suffices.
Confidentiality	Respect privacy; share details only with medical personnel.	Do not post photos or names on social media.

Tip: Carry a personal first-aid kit and a copy of the Good Samaritan guidelines in your bag or phone; they give confidence to act quickly.

5 Common Ethical Dilemmas—What Would You Do?

- Bystander filming instead of helping:** Politely ask them to call an ambulance and guide traffic.
- Bleeding stranger vs. risk of HIV:** Wear gloves if possible; severe bleeding takes priority—Good Samaritan law protects you.
- Child with injury but parent refuses care:** If life-threatening, call EMS; life preservation overrides parental refusal in emergencies.

6 Quick Self-Check Questions

- Name the **three Ps** of first aid.
- If a casualty is unconscious and breathing, what is your next position and why?
- List two actions that could make you legally liable even under Good Samaritan protection.
- Explain “implied consent” in one sentence.
- What phone number connects to emergency medical services across India?

*Answers: (1) Preserve life, Prevent further harm, Promote recovery. (2) Recovery (side-lying) position to keep airway clear. (3) Abandoning care midway; performing invasive procedure beyond training. (4) The law assumes an unconscious person would want life-saving help. (5) Dial **112**.*

7 Key Take-Home Points

- **Stay safe, act fast, call help.** Your safety ensures you can help others.
- **Follow DR A B C D** every time—practice until it’s automatic.
- **Know your legal shield and limits.** Consent, Good Samaritan law, and scope of practice protect you **if** you act responsibly.



- **Simple measures save lives.** Open an airway, stop bleeding, reassure—that alone can double survival odds.
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Next step: Practise these principles in the skills lab: simulate finding an unconscious classmate, run through DR A B C D, and document the incident in a mock report form.

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