

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.

- D - Danger:** Is the scene safe for you and the casualty?
- R - Response:** Tap shoulders, shout “Are you okay?”
- A - Airway:** Tilt head-lift chin (unless spinal injury) to clear airway.
- B - Breathing:** Look, listen, feel for normal breathing 10 s.
- C - Circulation:** If not breathing, start chest compressions $100-120 \text{ min}^{-1}$. Control major bleeding.
- 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>"I am trained in first aid; can I help you?"</i> | 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.

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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