



MEDICAL EMERGENCY

WHAT IT IS

A medical emergency is any acute injury or illness that poses an immediate risk to a person's life or long-term health. You can't predict accidents or illnesses, but you can prepare for a medical emergency.

Medical emergencies may happen on their own, or they may be a secondary impact of virtually every other hazard addressed in this Community Emergency Response Guide.

Some examples of medical emergencies are: difficulty breathing, fainting, chest pain or pressure, uncontrolled bleeding, coughing or vomiting blood, sudden severe pain, poisoning, or major injuries, such as broken bones, lacerations, burns, or puncture wounds.

KEY TERMS

- ▶ **CPR** is short for cardiopulmonary resuscitation. CPR is an emergency procedure in which the heart and lungs are made to work by compressing the chest overlying the heart and forcing air into the lungs. It is used to maintain circulation when the heart has stopped pumping on its own. CPR courses are offered by many community organizations.
- ▶ **First Aid** refers to a course of basic injury-treatment and life-saving skills offered by many community organizations.
- ▶ An **Automated External Defibrillator (AED)** is a portable device that checks the heart rhythm and can send an electric shock to the heart to try to restore a normal rhythm.
- ▶ **File of Life** is a form that you keep on your refrigerator door that provides emergency personnel critical medical and emergency-contact information in case you are unable to provide that information to them yourself.

WHAT TO DO

Before (Preparedness/ Mitigation)

- ❑ Know how to call or text 911.
- ❑ Keep well-stocked First Aid kits at home, at work and in your car.
- ❑ Put together a list of emergency contacts.
- ❑ Keep a list of medical conditions and medications with you at all times.
- ❑ Fill out a File of Life and put it on your refrigerator door.
- ❑ Learn the warning signs of medical emergencies.
- ❑ Participate in trainings such as CPR, First Aid, Basic Life Support (BLS), or Stop the Bleed to prepare yourself for emergencies.

During (Response)

- ❑ Stay calm, and call 911. If you are trained, start CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) or rescue breathing, if necessary.
- ❑ If you think you are having a medical emergency, seek immediate medical care.
- ❑ Gather as much information as possible about the circumstance, and call 911. Follow all the operator's instructions carefully. Stay on the line until the operator says it's OK to hang up.
- ❑ If you have only a brief time with the operator, make sure you share your address and your medical issue first.
- ❑ Call if you can, text if you can't. It is always preferred that you call 911 since it is a better way of exchanging information.

After (Recovery)

- ❑ Review all your documentation to ensure your emergency contact and medical information are up to date.
- ❑ Educate others in your networks to better prepare your community.