

Subject: **AHA - No mouth-to-mouth required in new CPR rules**

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Just press on the chest of adult victims till help arrives, heart group urges

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You can skip the mouth-to-mouth breathing and just press on the chest to save a life.

In a major change, the American Heart Association said Monday that hands-only CPR - rapid, deep presses on the victim's chest until help arrives - works just as well as standard CPR for sudden cardiac arrest in adults.

Experts hope bystanders will now be more willing to jump in and help if they see someone suddenly collapse. Hands-only CPR is simpler and easier to remember and removes a big barrier for people skittish about the mouth-to-mouth breathing.

"You only have to do two things. Call 911 and push hard and fast on the middle of the person's chest," said Dr. Michael Sayre, an emergency medicine professor at Ohio State University who headed the committee that made the recommendation.

Hands-only CPR calls for uninterrupted chest presses - 100 a minute - until paramedics take over or an automated external defibrillator is available to restore a normal heart rhythm.

This action should be taken only for adults who unexpectedly collapse, stop breathing and are unresponsive. The odds are that the person is having cardiac arrest - the heart suddenly stops - which can occur after a heart attack or be caused by other heart problems. In such a case, the victim still has ample air in the lungs and blood and compressions keep blood flowing to the brain, heart and other organs.

A child who collapses is more likely to primarily have breathing problems - and in that case, mouth-to-mouth breathing should be used. That also applies to adults who suffer lack of oxygen from a near-drowning, drug overdose, or carbon monoxide poisoning. In these cases, people need mouth-to-mouth to get air into their lungs and bloodstream.

'Better than nothing'

But in either case, "Something is better than nothing," Sayre said.

The CPR guidelines had been inching toward compression-only. The last update, in 2005, put more emphasis on chest pushes by alternating 30 presses with two quick breaths; those "unable or unwilling" to do the breaths could do presses alone.

Now the heart association has given equal standing to hands-only CPR. Those who have been trained in traditional cardiopulmonary resuscitation can still opt to use it.

Sayre said the association took the unusual step of making the changes now - the next update wasn't due until 2010 - because three studies last year showed hands-only was as good as traditional CPR. Hands-only will be added

to CPR training.

An estimated 310,000 Americans die each year of cardiac arrest. Only about 6 percent of those who are stricken outside a hospital survive, although rates vary by location. People who quickly get hands-only CPR while awaiting medical treatment have double or triple the chance of surviving. But less than a third of victims get this essential help.

Dr. Gordon Ewy, who's been pushing for hands-only CPR for 15 years, said he was "dancing in the streets" over the heart association's change even though he doesn't think it goes far enough. Ewy (pronounced AY-vee) is director of the University of Arizona Sarver Heart Center in Tucson, where the compression-only technique was pioneered.

Ewy said there's no point to giving early breaths in the case of sudden cardiac arrest, and it takes too long to stop compressions to give two breaths - 16 seconds for the average person. He noted that victims often gasp periodically anyway, drawing in a little air on their own.

Anonymous surveys show that people are reluctant to do mouth-to-mouth, Ewy said, partly because of fear of infections.

"When people are honest, they're not going to do it," he said. "It's not only the yuck factor."

In recent years, emergency service dispatchers have been coaching callers in hands-only CPR rather than telling them how to alternate breaths and compressions.

Easier and more reliable

"They love it. It's less complicated and the outcomes are better," said Dallas emergency medical services chief Dr. Paul Pepe, who also chairs emergency medicine at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

One person who's been spreading the word about hands-only CPR is Temecula, Calif., chiropractor Jared Hjelmstad, who helped save the life of a fellow health club member in Southern California

Hjelmstad, 40, had read about it in a medical journal and used it on Garth Goodall, who collapsed while working out at their gym in February. Hjelmstad's 15-year-old son Josh called 911 in the meantime.

Hjelmstad said he pumped on Goodall's chest for more than 12 minutes - encouraged by Goodall's intermittent gasps - until paramedics arrived. He was thrilled to find out the next day that Goodall had survived.

On Sunday, he visited Goodall in the hospital where he is recovering from triple bypass surgery.

"After this whole thing happened, I was on cloud nine," said Hjelmstad. "I was just fortunate enough to be there."

Goodall, a 49-year-old construction contractor, said he had been healthy and fit before the collapse, and there'd been no hint that he had clogged heart arteries.

"I was lucky," he said. Had the situation been reversed, "I wouldn't have known what to do."

"It's a second lease on life," he added.