

## FAQ: I'm a first aider. Should I change the way I respond to an emergency call?

Information reviewed and current as at 07/12/2022. Next review to be carried out on or before 01/03/2023

*There remains a real likelihood of you being called to a first aid incident in the University which involves a person who is infected with COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2). Circulation rates in the population remain moderately high and variable due to the transmissibility of the predominant viral strains, reductions in standards of behaviour and the withdrawal of the free testing programme and reporting system. However, vaccines and boosters still appear able to reduce the impact of the disease on vaccinated individuals.*

*This guidance has been updated regularly in line with that from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK) and the University's First Aid training provider. The guidance from HSE and RCUK is now very limited and only refers to the actions that first responders may wish to take if there is a perception of an increased infection risk.*

*The University believes that you should continue to exercise due caution when attending first aid casualties to minimise the risk of either of you becoming infected. For this reason, we will continue to provide you with a Safety Pouch which includes:-*

- *Fluid-resistant surgical masks (FRSM) for you and the casualty to use during a first aid incident*
- *Safety glasses (of the type which fit over the majority of prescription spectacles)*
- *Disposable nitrile gloves*
- *Disposable polythene apron*
- *A bottle of alcohol-based hand sanitiser*
- *Disinfectant surface wipes*

*As a first aider, you should minimise the risk of transmission to casualties by staying away from your place of work if you show any symptoms of cold or flu, and by taking lateral flow tests where possible.*

### Approaching the casualty

**While Government advice no longer places an emphasis on social distancing, the risk of transmission is still reduced by keeping your distance from the casualty. At a distance, and while wearing a surgical facemask, assess whether the casualty is conscious. IF NOT, immediately don your other PPE (safety glasses, apron and gloves) and follow your training for provision of resuscitation techniques, taking into account the following modifications:-**

### Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

The following guidance is based on that issued by RCUK and HSE, including campus-specific details:-

- **Remember that if someone has had a cardiac arrest, they will almost certainly die if they are not treated. The use of a facemask and other protective equipment will reduce the risk of virus transmission so that you can be confident when treating them.**
- **Recognise cardiac arrest by looking for the absence of signs of life and the absence of normal breathing. Do not listen or feel for breathing by placing your ear and cheek close to the patient's mouth.** If you are in any doubt about confirming cardiac arrest, the default position is to start chest compressions until help arrives.
- **Call Community Safety (024 765 22222, or 22222 on an internal phone) to request an ambulance, stating the exact location. They will call the ambulance service and escort it to the appropriate rendezvous point.**
- **If you require support and advice from ambulance control, ask Community Safety to patch your call through, and put your phone on speaker so that you can treat the patient and still communicate with ambulance control. If COVID-19 is suspected, tell them when you call.**
- **If the patient is not wearing a face-covering or mask, apply a mask from your Safety Pouch to the patient's nose and mouth, ensuring that it doesn't restrict the airway. If you don't have a mask for them, a piece of clothing or a towel over the nose and mouth is a good substitute.**
- **Early use of a defibrillator significantly increases the person's chances of survival and does NOT generate aerosols which would indicate the need for you to wear higher levels of PPE.**

- You should attempt **compression-only CPR and early defibrillation** until the ambulance (or advanced care team) arrives. Put hands together in the middle of the chest and push hard and fast – use the rhythm of the Bee Gees song “Staying Alive”.
- **Do not administer rescue breaths.** While recent evidence suggests that airway management procedures pose a low risk of aerosol generation, RCUK continues to recommend rescue breaths are omitted.
- If you have access to a bag valve mask (“Ambu Bag”), e.g. in an advanced first aid kit, you may use that to provide rescue breaths.
- After performing compression-only CPR, you (and anyone who has helped you) should remove all of your PPE, dispose of it carefully and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. The alcohol-based hand sanitiser in your kit is a convenient alternative if no hand-washing facilities are available nearby, but you should wash your hands as soon as possible.

### **All other first aid incidents**

- Based on your training, if you suspect a serious illness or injury, call for an ambulance immediately: Call Community Safety (024 765 22222, or 22222 on an internal phone) to request an ambulance, stating the exact location. They will call the ambulance service and escort them to the appropriate rendezvous point. If COVID-19 is suspected, tell them when you call.
- If you require support and advice from ambulance control, ask Community Safety to patch your call through, and put your phone on speaker so that you can treat the patient and still communicate with the ambulance call handler.

When first attending, stay a minimum of 2 metres away from the patient while establishing the circumstances of the injury. Ask the patient to wear a face-covering or mask if they are not already wearing one (you can provide them with one from your Safety Pouch if they do not have one).

Wear a surgical facemask from your Safety Pouch

Ask the patient to confirm if they have any of the early symptoms of COVID-19 infection:-

- High temperature
- New, persistent cough
- A loss of the sense of smell or taste
- Other cold and flu-like symptoms

*If they have, exercise caution, and advise the patient that they should return home and remain there until they have recovered, and ideally have performed a lateral flow test producing a negative result.*

Try to assist at a safe distance from the casualty as much as you can and minimise the time you share a breathing zone.

If they are capable, tell them to do things for you, but treating the casualty properly should be your first concern.

If you need to administer treatment yourself, sanitise your hands, then don your remaining PPE (polythene apron, safety glasses and disposable gloves).

Treat the case in the normal way.

When you have ended all contact with the casualty, remove your PPE in the following order:-

- Gloves
- Apron (ensure you only touch the inside surfaces of the polythene)
- SANITISE YOUR HANDS
- Eye Protection
- Surgical Mask

Bag any waste materials, including your gloves, apron, mask, paper tissues, etc., and place the sealed bag in the appropriate waste stream for collection, in line with how you have been trained.

Wash your hands thoroughly (for a minimum of 20 seconds) with soap and hot water. The alcohol-based hand gel in your kit is a convenient alternative if washing facilities are not immediately available. Advise the casualty to also wash their hands straightaway.

Wash your safety glasses under hot water and dry with a paper towel or use a disinfectant wipe from your kit.

**If you need to call for an ambulance, call Community Safety (024 765 22222, or 22222 on an internal phone) and confirm the exact location. They will call the ambulance service and escort them to the right place to avoid delays.**

*Thank you for your continued service to the University community.*

#### **Useful links to additional information**

[Guidance on first aid from the Health & Safety Executive](#)

[Performing CPR during COVID-19, from the Resuscitation Council UK](#)

[University Coronavirus webpages](#)