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# First Aid for (drug) emergencies

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There are risks involved with taking drugs, even following safer-use rules!

Whether or not the emergency was caused by taking drugs doesn't matter: First Aid always handles the symptoms of the case!

## General rules

- If someone around you has an emergency situation: stay calm.
- Ask other people to help you and stay with the person. Try to talk to him or her and check whether medical help is necessary. If so, call 112 immediately [free call from any telephone, including mobile phones with no credit]! If the person "isn't breathing", "cannot respond" or "is having a seizure", then the emergency service will include an emergency doctor.
- Do first aid for the symptoms until the ambulance comes.
- Don't be afraid that you'll do something wrong. Someone needs your help, and not doing anything may cost someone's life.
- If you can't judge the situation or you feel overwhelmed: call emergency services!

If you call 112, you only have to describe the symptoms and you don't have to mention anything about drugs. If you do mention drugs, the police may also come along. This varies from place to place.

When the emergency doctor is there, explain which substances were taken (as far as you know), the doctor, like the emergency service personnel, are legally required to maintain confidentiality!

## If you find someone

- Secure the location where the accident took place so that you don't put yourself in danger (hanging wires, pieces of glass, etc.)!
- Check if the person is conscious: talk with them, shake them lightly, see if they respond to pain (pinch the underside of the upper arm)
- If the person is unconscious: watch their breathing: if necessary, clean out the roof of their mouth. Pull their head back to make sure that the airways are clear. Bend over the person and check the following: chest is rising and falling, sound of breathing, breath on your cheeks.

If the person is breathing, but not conscious → see First Aid for someone unconscious

If the person isn't conscious or breathing → see First Aid for someone not breathing/heart not pumping

## First Aid for someone unconscious

Symptoms: person is breathing, but is not conscious

- recovery position
- call the emergency doctor
- keep the person warm with blankets, etc.
- watch their breathing
- if they ask: do not give them food, if they want water, make sure it's not carbonated

## First Aid for someone not breathing/heart not pumping

Symptoms: person isn't conscious or breathing

IMMEDIATELY begin heart-lung resuscitation!

**Cardiac massage and artificial respiration [= heart-lung resuscitation].** At a rhythm of 30:2, do the following: 30 times cardiac massage, 2 times mouth-to-nose or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, then check their breathing. If it hasn't started immediately, repeat this heart-lung resuscitation again immediately!

**Heart-lung resuscitation:** if two people are available, you can divide the tasks and your energy. One person can do the resuscitation and the other can do the cardiac massage, do this in turns. Do this pattern until the doctor comes or until the unconscious person begins breathing again on their own!

**How to do mouth-to-nose resuscitation:** lay the unconscious person on his/her back on the floor, kneel down to the side. Take any foreign objects from the mouth of the person. Gently pull back the head of the person, so that the airways aren't blocked by the tongue. Push their jaw up and close the mouth. Inhale deeply and exhale into the nose of the unconscious person, as fast and often as you normally breathe. Keep checking if the chest of the unconscious person starts going up and down. Repeat! Keep resuscitating until the doctor comes or the person begins breathing again.

**How to do a cardiac massage:** the person has to be lying on a stable and hard surface. Put one palm on top of the other, and put them both in the middle of the chest [in the lower third of the breastbone]. Spread your fingers along the chest and with your arms out straight, push the breastbone (not the whole chest!) straight down [3-5 cm] – quickly, but firmly. Repeat this slightly faster than the second hand of a clock [between 80-100 times per minute].

Do the cardiac massage and heart-lung resuscitation one after the other, at a quick pace: 30 times cardiac massage, then 2 resuscitations - until the doctor arrives!

## First Aid for shock

Symptoms: fast, weak pulse, paleness, cold sweat, agitated, disoriented, nausea

Lay the person flat on their back, and rest their legs above their body, check breathing and consciousness. If nothing improves: call emergency services!

## First Aid for seizures [e.g. epileptic seizures]

Symptoms: eyes roll back, muscles get stiff, arms and legs itch a lot (they may often foam at the mouth; release urine and excrement)

Lay the person down, protect them from harm (move away any objects and furniture, place pillows or clothes under their head). Do not try to hold the person down!

If the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes or if it's the first time it's happened to this person: call the emergency doctor! If the attack ends, put the person in the recovery position, check their breathing and pulse. After an attack, you absolutely should call the doctor!

## First Aid for heat stroke

Symptoms: red, hot head; warm, almost hot skin; racing pulse, nausea

It is important to place the person so that their head is up (sit them down, and stay by them). Give him/her vitamins and mineral drinks. If you're at a party, the best thing is to find a chill out area (if there is one) or to go outside. Otherwise, find a calm, cool corner to stay. If the person doesn't get better, call the emergency services! In this case too, stay with the person the whole time and check their breathing and pulse.

## First Aid for bad trips

Symptoms: the person is disoriented, panicky, is scared (a horror trip)

If someone shows these symptoms, he/she is probably overwhelmed by the effects of the drugs he/she took.

- First and foremost: give this person the feeling of security [when you can, find a known, trusted person to stay with them]
- Try to stay with the person!
- Talk to him/her calmly, try to move their thoughts in a more positive direction! Keep telling him/her that this will end and everything will be fine.
- If you can, take the person to a calm location.
- Touch them softly, especially if you know the person! This builds feelings of security. Be careful with people that you don't know. This may cause more anxiety.
- Give him/her warm drinks (tea) or water (no coffee, no Red Bull! since they may interact with the substances taken!)
- Make sure the person doesn't get too cold or too hot.
- If the person starts breathing too quickly (hyperventilating), show the person how to breathe normally, or give them a paper bag that they can breathe into.
- Be yourself. If you are insecure or afraid, get somebody to help; be aware of your limits: don't do anything you don't feel alright with.

Note: These tips do not replace a First Aid class!

You can visit a comprehensive First Aid class for free (these are not the quick classes that you take to get a driver's license) that are offered by the German Red Cross (DRK) and other organizations.

This text was made with the best intention and conscience. However, there may be errors. The Drug Scouts do not take responsibility for damage resulting from any application of the information in this article.