

# Basic life support. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation in times of COVID-19

To assist a casualty with cardiac arrest you should follow these **4 steps** in a quick, orderly manner:

## 1. Initial assessment of a of cardiac arrest situation

When approaching the casualty make sure that you are not putting your life in danger. Kneel down next to them and check whether they are conscious by asking loudly "Hello, are you all right? Can you hear me?".

If there is no response, shake them gently by the shoulders, never the face or by moving the neck.

If the casualty is unconscious, check whether they are breathing normally. To reduce the risk of infection do not open an airway or put your face close to the victim's. If after 10 seconds breathing is absent, you can consider it to be a case of cardiorespiratory arrest.



## 2. It is fundamental to call 112

Ask people around you for help. Call

112: identify yourself, say where you are, that there is an unconscious casualty who is not breathing and that you are starting cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).



Leave your phone connected and activate the speaker function so that you can start CPR while talking to the dispatcher.

## 3. Start resuscitation

If you have a handkerchief, place it over the casualty's face to prevent spreading the virus during the compressions. Give chest compressions until medical assistance arrives or a semi-automatic defibrillator (SAED)

becomes available, or until you are certain that the casualty has recovered.

## Chest compressions

- Place your hands with the fingers interlocking, in the centre of the casualty's chest.

- Position yourself vertically above the casualty's chest and give **compressions with straight arms**, at a right angle to their body.

- Press down on the sternum 4-5 cm, at a rate of **100 times per minute**, maximum 120, releasing all the pressure on the chest to allow the sternum to return to its initial position before starting the next compression.



## 4. If a semi-automatic defibrillator is available

Switch it on, attach the cables to the SAED and the electrode pads as indicated in the illustrations: one pad below the right shoulder blade and one below the left armpit. Follow the instructions given by the SAED until medical assistance arrives:

- If the SAED indicates that it is analysing the heart's rhythm, stop CPR until it instructs you to resume.
- If a shock is advised, stop CPR, ensure that neither you nor anyone else is touching the casualty and push the shock button as directed. Then immediately resume CPR.

5. If the casualty recovers at any point, place them on their side in the recovery position, with the top leg bent over the bottom one.

6. Once resuscitation is completed, wash your hands with soap and water or hand-sanitising gel, and contact the health authorities to assess whether it is a matter of a close contact with a potential COVID-19 case.