

CPR is the same for everybody, but everybody is not the same.

In an emergency, every second counts, and women and people with breasts are statistically less likely to receive bystander CPR than men. So, why are people less likely to perform CPR on a person with breasts?

Reason one: People fear accusations of non-sexual and/or sexual assault for inappropriate touching, fear of exposing breasts and performing mouth-to-mouth.

- It is extremely unlikely to be sued when attempting to save somebody in cardiac arrest. If you do not know how to do CPR and use a defibrillator, when you call emergency services, they will guide you through how to do it correctly.
- To do CPR correctly, your hands must be placed in the middle of the chest, so you may touch the person's breast. This is appropriate for effective CPR. Whilst touching someone without their consent is assault, a defence against an accusation of assault is of necessity. When performing CPR, it is necessary to touch the person to try and save their life.
- When performing CPR, you do **not** need to remove any of the person's clothing. CPR can be done over whatever clothing that the person is wearing.
- When using a defibrillator, the clothes **must** come off. This includes any type of bra or binding the person may be wearing. All clothing can be cut away using the safety scissors provided with the AED. You can ask bystanders to look away and create a shield to block the casualty from view to help preserve dignity.
- When someone is in cardiac arrest, they are unresponsive and not breathing. Whilst they may not be able to hear you, it is important to communicate to them and others around you what you are doing. You can walk them through the steps. For example, you could say "I am going to start CPR now" and "I am removing your clothing to place the AED pads which need to be placed onto a bare chest." If the person regains consciousness, reassure them, and tell them what has happened. For example, you could say "you have had a cardiac arrest, emergency services are on their way."

- If you are unable or unwilling to give rescue breaths, you can give continuous chest compressions instead.

Reason two: People fear injuring the person who is in cardiac arrest/women are more prone to injury than men.

- Injuries such as rib fractures are common and a recognised consequence of chest compressions. It is extremely unlikely to be sued when attempting to save somebody.
- Do not be put off from performing CPR because of fear of injury or being sued. Under the [SARAH Act](#), the courts will consider the context of your actions when intervening to help someone in an emergency if you are sued.

Reason three: Women do not suffer from cardiac arrests or are overly dramatic.

- Whilst men are more likely to suffer cardiac arrest, anyone can suffer from a cardiac arrest at any age. It does not discriminate.

Other fears and myths:

What if the person is pregnant?

- If you see a pregnant person in cardiac arrest, you should perform CPR and use a defibrillator in the same way that you would for a non-pregnant person.
- Rib fractures through the administration of CPR won't affect the baby due to the position of the baby. The use of a defibrillator is considered safe in all stages of pregnancy.
- If CPR and a defibrillator is not used, it is possible both the pregnant person and baby will not survive. The best way to save the baby's life is to restart the pregnant person's heart.

What if the person is from a religious background that calls for modesty?

- We understand that some people have strong religious beliefs that may not support removing clothes in public, however a defibrillator will be ineffective if not placed directly onto the skin. It is important to ask bystanders to look away and create and maintain a shield around the person to allow lifesaving action to take place.

What if the person is wearing an expensive bra or binding?

- It is vital to remove all clothing from the chest area when using a defibrillator by using the safety scissors provided. This includes cutting through items of clothing that may be expensive. Removing the clothing to attempt basic life support is more important than the clothing the person is wearing.

What if I don't know how to use a defibrillator?

- Defibrillators come with visual and verbal prompts. It will tell you exactly what to do and will only shock the person if it is needed. Anyone can use a defibrillator, even a child, it is that simple to use.

What if someone has body or nipple piercings?

- When using a defibrillator, you do not need to remove any piercings from the chest area. Instead, avoid placing the AED pads over the piercings. It is possible to get minor burns, but it is more important to attempt to save the person's life using a defibrillator than removing piercings.