Medical Emergencies and First Aid

If there happens to be a medical emergency while youth are home alone, it is best for them to be ready to cope with the responsibility of calling 911 and assisting the person having an emergency. Virginia 4-H’s “Safe at Home, Safe Alone” youth workbook is a great resource for these situations. They suggest:

When making a 911 call, try to remember “WANT”:

What happened?
Address
Name
Telephone Number

The list of emergency contacts you saw in tip #3 could be useful in this situation, as some people tend to panic and may forget this vital info. Stay on the line with the 911 operator until they tell you to hang up or police/EMS arrive. Remember, even cell phones without regular service can be used to call 911.

The 911 operator can assist you with what the next steps will be to care for the person having an emergency until help arrives. Remember, when you come upon an emergency do your best to first assess the situation – make sure it is safe to approach – because you can’t help others if you yourself are also injured. Wear gloves when possible, and avoiding moving the injured person unless told to do so or it is necessary for their safety.

A 911 call is warranted in these situations –

• A person is bleeding heavily
• A person is not breathing
• A person is unconscious
• A person is badly burned
• A person has a broken bone
• A person has a great pain in some part of the body

If you are unsure, always err on the side of caution. It is better to need help and receive it then need it and not have it.
The American Red cross offers some excellent resources to prepare for basic first aid situations, although a formal first aid/CPR training is ideal. You can find a class here - [https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid](https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid) - or check out their class materials on the same page to help get yourself started at home.

For basic first aid that does not require a call to 911, be sure to discuss as a family what common injuries you encounter when not alone, and how you handle them. Make or purchase a first aid kit and have it readily available in the same location for everyone to use when needed. Be sure to frequently check the kit to make sure it is well stocked, or restock as needed. Some important items to include are bandages, alcohol wipes, gloves, antibacterial cream, gauze pads, adhesive tape, an instant ice pack, tweezers and a thermometer. Some common injuries this kit can be used on are:

**Small Cuts - What do I do?**

1. Press down on the cut with a clean cloth if it is bleeding for several minutes. (If the bleeding does not stop in 5 minutes, call for help.)
2. Wash wound with soap and water, gently removing any dirt.
3. Let the cut dry, apply antiseptic ointment or cream, and cover it with a Band-Aid to keep it clean.

**Animal Bites - What do I do?**

1. Treat it the same way as a small or large cut.
2. Call for help immediately to try to find the animal. It is important to know from the owner if the animal has had the necessary shots for certain diseases.

**Bug Bites and Stings - What do I do?**

1. In most cases, the sting will feel hot, may itch, and have a red bump on the area.
2. If the stinger is there, remove it by gently scraping it with your fingernail. Do not squeeze. Do not pull out.
3. Wash with a clean cloth and soap and water.
4. Soothe the pain with an ice pack.
5. Call for help if the pain continues OR to remove the stinger.

Some people are allergic to stings from insects. Symptoms include: lots of red bumps that sting and itch (called hives), nausea, feeling dizzy, and tightness in your throat that makes it difficult to breathe. If any of these occur, call 911!

If you know you are allergic and have medication to take, call an adult for help.
**Burns - What do I do?**

There are 3 degrees of burns:

1st degree – skin is red
2nd degree – skin red with blisters
3rd degree – skin is burned away

1. **For a 1st or 2nd degree burn:** place the burned area under cold, running water for several minutes. Cover the burn loosely with sterile dressing. Do not break open blisters.

2. **For a 3rd degree burn:** call 911! Do not put it in cool water. The burn could become infected.

A chemical burn comes from any type of chemical substance that might come in contact with the skin and turns it red. Always flush the burned area with cold water. Remove any clothes and jewelry that might still have the chemical on it.

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**Something in the Eye - What do I do?**

1. If a liquid chemical is in the eye, quickly rinse the eye with water for 15 minutes. The easiest way to do this is to fill the bathtub with cool or lukewarm water and sit it in while rinsing your eye.

2. Call for help.

3. If dust or dirt gets in the eye, blink a few times to try and remove it. DO NOT rub your eye! If something is in the eye, rubbing can scratch it.

4. Call for help if the eye is still irritated.

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**Nosebleed - What do I do?**

1. Find some tissues or a towel to hold under your nose and sit down in a chair, leaning the head slightly forward. It is best if you can go to the kitchen or bathroom. Do not lie down.

2. Press the bleeding nostril to the center of the nose. Apply this pressure for 10 minutes. If the bleeding does not stop, press in for another 5 minutes.

3. Call for help if still bleeding after 15 minutes.
Small Cuts - What do I do?

1. Press down on the cut with a clean cloth if it is bleeding for several minutes. (If the bleeding does not stop in 5 minutes, call for help.)

2. Wash wound with soap and water, gently removing any dirt.

3. Let the cut dry, apply antiseptic ointment or cream, and cover it with a Band-Aid to keep it clean.

Large Cuts - What do I do?

1. Press down on the cut with a clean cloth to stop the bleeding. (If it does stop bleeding, follow the above instructions for a small cut.)

2. If it does not stop bleeding and the blood soaks through: place another clean cloth on the cut, continue applying pressure and do not remove the cloth. Lie down if possible and raise the injured part up.

3. Call 911!

Stitches are needed if: the edges of the cut skin do not fall together, the cut is on the face, or the wound is over one half inch long.

Someone Eats or Drinks Poison - What do I do?

Call the Poison Control Emergency Number (1-800-222-1222) immediately! This should be posted on your Emergency Number List by the phone.

1. Try to find the box or bottle containing the poison to read the label. Tell them exactly what was swallowed and how much.

2. Follow the directions and call 911 if necessary!

There are many items in a household that can be poisonous, such as laundry detergents, pesticides, perfume, medications, and some plants.