

# Doing CPR on Women

Australian CPR guidelines are the same for women and men

## CPR on Women: What is the Same

CPR for women follows exactly the same process as CPR for men under Australian guidelines:

- ▶ Start CPR if the person is unresponsive and not breathing normally.
- ▶ Push hard and fast in the centre of the chest.
- ▶ Aim for 100–120 compressions per minute.
- ▶ Continue until help arrives or an AED tells you to stop.
- ▶ If you are unwilling or unable to give rescue breaths, chest-compression-only CPR is still effective and recommended.

## Breasts and Hand Placement

- ▶ CPR can begin without removing clothing.
- ▶ Hands are placed on the centre of the chest (sternum).
- ▶ Your hands may touch breast tissue, this is normal and unavoidable.
- ▶ Breast tissue does not prevent effective compressions.
- ▶ There is no need to avoid or change technique because the person is a woman.
- ▶ Australian and international guidance confirms that effective CPR may involve contact with breasts and this is appropriate in a medical emergency.

## Pregnancy

- ▶ CPR and defibrillation should not be delayed because a woman is pregnant.
- ▶ AEDs can and should be used during pregnancy if cardiac arrest occurs.
- ▶ Saving the mother's life is the best chance of survival for the baby.

## Using a Defibrillator (AED) on Women

- ▶ AEDs are safe and recommended for women, including pregnant women.
- ▶ Pads must be placed on bare skin in the positions shown on the AED diagrams.
- ▶ If breasts affect pad placement, they can be gently moved aside to place pads correctly.
- ▶ The AED will only deliver a shock if it is needed - you cannot accidentally shock someone whose heart rhythm does not require it.

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## Cultural Considerations

Cultural or family concerns may arise. These should be acknowledged and respected without delaying care. Some measures include:

- ▶ Asking bystanders to help create privacy using a sheet or thermal blanket (commonly included in a first aid kit).
- ▶ If family members object to physical contact, offer to coach them verbally through CPR and defibrillation so that they can perform the lifesaving intervention.
- ▶ Ensure action begins immediately to maintain the best chance of survival.

## Bras and Clothing

- ▶ Clothing must be opened or cut to expose the chest for AED pad placement.
- ▶ Bras do not need to be fully removed unless they interfere with pad placement.
- ▶ Underwire bras should be removed or cut away to avoid potential interference or burns during defibrillation. AED kits usually include shears for this purpose.

## Legal Protections in Australia

- ▶ All Australian states and territories have Good Samaritan protections.
- ▶ People who provide CPR or use an AED in good faith are protected from legal liability.
- ▶ There are no recorded cases in Australia of successful legal action against a bystander for providing CPR in good faith
- ▶ (reported consistently in Australian first aid education and media).

## Myth vs Fact

**Myth:** Breasts stop CPR from working

**Fact:** CPR works the same on all chest anatomy

**Myth:** I might hurt her or be inappropriate

**Fact:** CPR saves lives, Medical necessity makes it appropriate

Don't hesitate because of breasts, bras, pregnancy, or social discomfort. Early action saves lives.