

What Is the Indication for Mouth-to-Mouth Rescue Breaths?

Do you know when to give mouth-to-mouth rescue breaths and when not to? Use this guide to learn how to handle various emergency situations.

When to Administer Rescue Breaths

Emergency	Do You Administer Rescue Breaths? Yes!
Nearly Drowning	When someone has inhaled a significant amount of water, mouth-to-mouth rescue breaths can help get air into the lungs so they can breathe. <i>In this situation, nearly drowning means the person is still alive. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is not recommended for clear deaths.</i>
Drug Overdose	Drugs can slow or decrease the function of the respiratory system. Signs of opioid overdose include slow or nonexistent breathing. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation (aka, rescue breaths) can get the victim enough oxygen until emergency help arrives.
Choking	Similar to asthma attacks, choking is an obstruction to the airway, so getting oxygen into a person's lungs can help save the victim's life.

When NOT to Administer Rescue Breaths

Situation	Do You Administer Rescue Breaths? NO!
Signs of Life	If a victim is conscious, breathing normally, or displaying clear signs of life, rescue breaths need not be administered.
DNR Orders	If a victim has a valid do not resuscitate (DNR) order or an advance directive indicating that they do not wish to be revived, rescue breaths may not be given. <i>In an emergency situation with a stranger, it can be difficult or impossible to determine the state of DNR orders. The above applies more to individuals with ongoing illnesses.</i>
Contagious Disease	If a victim has a highly contagious disease, consider protective measures between you, the rescuer, and the victim before administering rescue breaths.
Clear Death	If a victim has a highly contagious disease, consider protective measures between you, the rescuer, and the victim before administering rescue breaths.

The International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (ILCOR) and the American Heart Association recommend “hands-only” CPR for adults in certain situations, including cases where the rescuer is not trained in CPR or is unwilling to provide rescue breaths.

Get trained in CPR to increase your confidence, skills, and lifesaving abilities, including the use of rescue breaths!

How to Perform Rescue Breaths



Giving Rescue Breaths to Adults

- 1 Open the airway by tilting the chin up.
- 2 Pinch the victim’s nose shut.
- 3 Take a normal breath and put your mouth against the other person’s mouth to form a seal.
- 4 Breathe into the person’s mouth steadily for one second, with enough force to make their chest rise.
- 5 Remove your mouth to let the victim’s chest fall before administering the next breath, alternating 2 breaths with 30 chest compressions.



Giving Rescue Breaths to Children

- 1 Place the head in a neutral position and lift the chin, opening the airway.
- 2 Take a breath, then seal the mouth and nose with your mouth.
- 3 Blow a breath steadily into the mouth and nose over 1 second. It should be sufficient to make the chest visibly rise.
- 4 Keeping their head tilted and chin lifted, take your mouth away and watch for the chest to fall as air comes out.
- 5 Take another breath and repeat this sequence, alternating 2 breaths with 30 chest compressions.



Giving Rescue Breaths to Infants

- 1 Place the head in a neutral position and lift the chin, opening the airway.
- 2 Close the nostrils gently using your fingers.
- 3 Open their mouth slightly, keeping the chin pointing upwards.
- 4 Take a breath, then form a seal around their mouth with your mouth.
- 5 Blow a breath steadily into their mouth over about 1 second, watching for the chest to rise.
- 6 Keeping their head tilted and chin lifted, take your mouth away and watch for the chest to fall as air comes out.
- 5 Take another breath and repeat this sequence, alternating 2 breaths with 30 chest compressions.