

## heal thyself?

Chances are, someone in your household will suffer one of the injuries listed here (roughly in order from least to most serious). To be prepared, review the instructions and then post them on your refrigerator or keep them in your first-aid kit.



### bloody nose

A nosebleed occurs when blood vessels inside the nose break. Because they're delicate, this can happen easily.

- **What to do immediately:** Lean slightly forward and pinch your nose just below the bridge, where the cartilage and the bone come together. Maintain the pressure for 5 to 15 minutes. Pressing an ice pack against the bridge can also help.
- **What not to do:** Tilt your head back. "You may swallow blood, and potentially some could go in your lungs," says David Markenson, M.D., chair of the American Red Cross Advisory Council on First Aid and Safety.
- **When to seek medical attention:** Call your doctor if you can't stop the bleeding after 20 minutes; if the nosebleed happened spontaneously; or if it accompanies a headache, dizziness, ringing in the ears, or vision problems.

### object in eye

Anything that gets in your eye, whether it's a speck of sand or a chemical, can cause pain and could damage the cornea.

- **What to do immediately:** Try to dislodge a small particle by blinking several times. If it's not budging, rinse the eye by holding the lid open under a running tap (if possible, remove contact lenses first).
- **What not to do:** Never rub your eyes. Even a tiny piece of dirt can scratch the cornea and cause an infection. Never try to remove an object that's deeply embedded—leave that to the professionals.
- **When to seek medical attention:** If you have splashed a chemical (such as bleach) in your eye or have an object embedded in it, call 911. For minor irritants, call your doctor if your eye is still stinging or swelling after rinsing or if you have vision problems.

### sprain

Sprains occur when the ligaments surrounding a joint are pulled beyond their normal range. Sprains are often accompanied by bruising and swelling.

- **What to do immediately:** Alternately apply and remove ice every 20 minutes throughout the first day. Wrapping the joint with an elastic compression bandage and elevating the limb may also help. Stay off the injury for at least 24 hours. After that, apply heat to promote blood flow to the area.
- **What not to do:** Work through the pain, says Art Hsieh, chief operating officer for the San Francisco Paramedic Association, or you risk doing more serious damage, like tearing the ligament.
- **When to seek medical attention:** If the injury doesn't improve in a few days, you may have a fracture or a muscle or ligament tear; call a doctor.

### burn

First-degree burns produce redness; second-degree burns cause blisters; third-degree burns result in broken or blackened skin.

- **What to do immediately:** Place the burn under cool running water, submerge it in a bath, or apply wet towels. Loosely bandage a first- or second-degree burn for protection.
- **What not to do:** Put an ice pack on major burns. "Ice can damage the skin and worsen the injury," says Markenson. Don't pop blisters. Don't apply an antibiotic or butter to burns; doing so can breed infection.
- **When to seek medical attention:** Call 911 for third-degree, electrical, and chemical burns or if the victim is coughing, has watery eyes, or is having trouble breathing. Go to the ER for a second-degree burn that's larger than your palm—treatment may prevent scarring.



### blow to the head

The skull is very protective, so hitting it rarely results in injuries to the skull itself. But if the force is great, the neck, the back, and soft tissues inside the head can be injured.

- **What to do immediately:** If the person is unconscious, call 911. If the struck area is bleeding, treat it as you would any other cut, but follow up with your doctor, as there may be internal injuries. Icing a small bump can help reduce the swelling.

- **What not to do:** Leave the victim alone, especially when he's sleeping. Wake him up every three to four hours and have him answer simple questions to make sure there's no brain injury, such as a concussion.

- **When to seek medical attention:** Call 911 if the victim exhibits seizures, dizziness, vomiting, nausea, or obvious changes in behavior.



### choking

True choking is rare, says Hsieh. When a person is really choking, he can't cough strongly, speak, or breathe, and his face may turn red or blue.

- **What to do immediately:** Call 911. For a victim age one or older: Have the person lean forward and, using the palm of your hand, strike his back between the shoulder blades five times. If that doesn't work, stand behind the victim, place one fist above the belly button, cup the fist with your other hand, and push in and up toward the ribs five times, as in the Heimlich. If you're alone: Press your abdomen against something firm, like a kitchen counter, or use your hands.

- **What not to do:** Give water or anything else to someone who is coughing.

- **When to seek medical attention:** For a case of true choking, always call 911.



### poisoning

Potential household hazards include cleaning supplies, carbon monoxide, and pesticides. Bites and stings can also be poisonous to some people.

- **What to do immediately:** If a person is unconscious or having trouble breathing, call 911. In other cases, call the Poison Control Centers' national hotline (800-222-1222). Be prepared to tell what substance was involved, how much was taken and when, and the age and the weight of the victim.

- **What not to do:** Wait until symptoms appear to call for help. And don't give ipecac syrup or try to induce vomiting. The poison could cause additional damage when it comes back up. The victim shouldn't eat or drink anything, unless the hotline operator tells you otherwise.

- **When to seek medical attention:** Always.



### open wound

Breaks in the skin that bleed (such as a cut, a scrape, or a puncture) need to be treated promptly to avoid infection.

- **What to do immediately:** Place a piece of sterile gauze on the injury and apply pressure to stop the bleeding. For minor cuts and scrapes, wash with soap and water; follow with a thin layer of Vaseline or an antibiotic ointment and cover with a bandage.

- **What not to do:** Wash or apply ointment to a wound that's large, deep, or profusely bleeding. Instead, seek medical help. If there's an object protruding from the injury, don't try to remove it.

- **When to seek medical attention:** If there's an object in the cut, call 911. If the wound is deep, accompanied by a fever, or has redness, swelling, or red streaks around it, call your doctor.