



The Myth of “Cough CPR” as “Self CPR”

The idea of cough CPR has been traveling through the internet and chain emails for several years now. An animated slide presentation shows a moving car and proposes that the driver feels the signs and symptoms of heart attack. The reader is asked, “What do you do?” and the remaining slides direct the reader to provide self-CPR by coughing forcefully. This slide show and its recommendations give people a false sense of security, cause people to avoid calling 9-1-1 or a local emergency number, and will not result in a positive victim outcome.

The 2005 Guidelines for CPR and Emergency Cardiac Care mentions cough CPR in Part 6: CPR Techniques and Devices. The only case experience for this technique has been in a monitored cardiac catheterization suite. The Guidelines state, “Coughing every 1 to 3 seconds for up to 90 seconds after the onset of VF or pulseless VT is safe and effective only in conscious, supine, monitored patients previously trained to perform the maneuver. Defibrillation remains the treatment of choice for VF or pulseless VT.” A person experiencing heart attack symptoms may even worsen their situation through the holding of the breath that occurs during coughing, lessening the amount of oxygen to the brain.

The best action someone who is alone and experiences chest pain or other heart attack symptoms can take is to call 9-1-1 (or the local emergency number) to get an ambulance to their location. It is first-line drugs, oxygen, defibrillation (if needed), and rapid transport to an emergency department that will allow the victim the best chance of survival.

Know the symptoms of a heart attack

Chest discomfort. Pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain in the chest that lasts for a few minutes or comes and goes.

Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, shoulders, back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

Shortness of breath. Often accompanies chest discomfort.

Other signs. May include lightheadedness, fainting, sweating, or nausea.

Any experience with chest discomfort, especially when accompanied by one or more of these symptoms, warrants a call for help. **Don't hesitate – call 9-1-1.**



Be trained in CPR

Knowing how to respond to a first aid or CPR emergency is one of the most important skills a person can possess. Visit <http://www2.nsc.org/train/ec/> for more information on the Emergency Care courses offered by the National Safety Council.