



Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Florida Conference Brigade, Medical Cadet Corps
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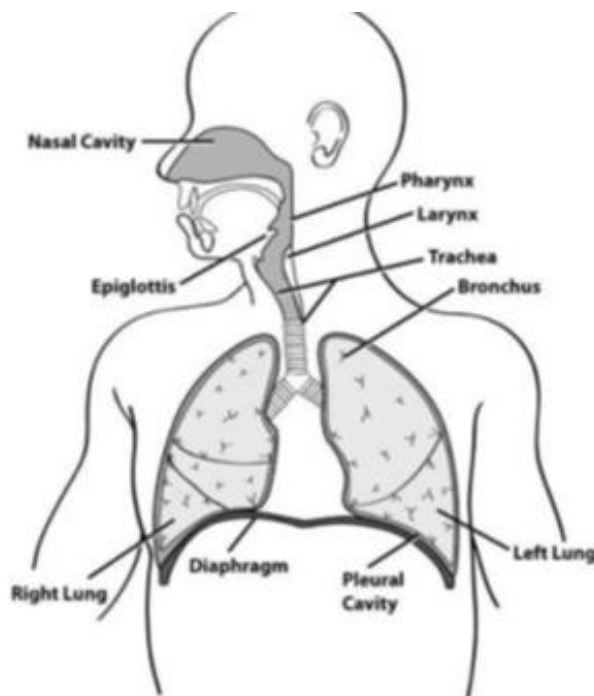
Disaster First Aid Part 3: Opening the Airway

Positioning an injured patient to keep their airway open is critical to saving their life. The best position allows the chest to expand fully and keep the airway open. **The most common airway obstruction is the tongue.** So the best position to breathe is one in which the tongue cannot flop back into the individual's throat or any fluid from the mouth cannot end up in the lungs.

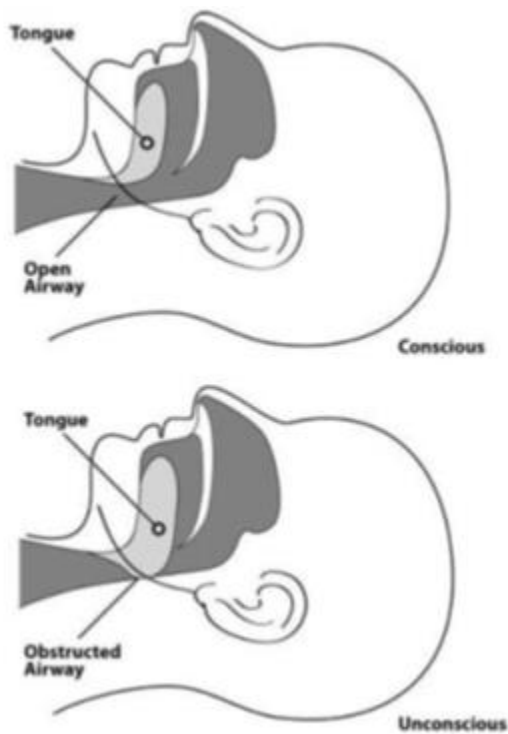
Respiratory Anatomy

The **respiratory system** includes the following components:

- Lung
- Bronchus
- **Larynx**
- **Pharynx**
- **Nasal cavity**
- **Trachea**



The airway shares some pathways with the digestive system, which only allow one component to be transported effectively at a time. Who has not tried to laugh and eat at the same time and ended up coughing.



The conscious person can hold their tongue out of the airway path when breathing. The unconscious patient will allow **the tongue to fall back** with gravity to the back of the throat, cutting off the airway.

Positioning a Conscious Patient

Someone who is alert will naturally assume the position that is best for them to breathe given their injuries. Despite how it looks to you, LET THEM SELF-MANAGE THEIR AIRWAY. Assist as needed for transportation or covering for warmth.

The **tripod position** is a natural way to open your airway. In this position, the lungs and ribcage are able to expand to the fullest extent.



When sitting, the legs will be spread apart, elbows or hands on knees, and the trunk leaning forward slightly.



When standing, the legs will be shoulder width apart, arms straight on knees or leaning forward with the back being held straight.

Positioning an Unconscious Patient

It can help to turn a patient on their side, so their chest can expand, tilting the head to drain fluid away from the airway. Be careful to keep in mind the potential of back and neck injuries, using a method to turn them that supports the back and neck to be straight and supported. This is called the **recovery position**.

Recovery Position

- Turn patient on their side, rolling them toward you
- Place the bottom arm reaching outward
- Place the top arm on the bicep of the bottom arm
- Head rests on top hand
- Bend legs slightly
- Bend the chin forward, while moving the mouth down to the ground.

Recovery Position



Jaw-thrust Maneuver

With an unconscious patient that is suspected of having an airway obstruction, use the jaw-thrust maneuver to clear the airway. To do this, kneel above the patient's head.



Put one hand on each side of the patient's head with the thumbs near the corners of the mouth pointed toward the chin, using the elbows for support.

Slide the fingers into position under the angles of the jawbone without moving the head or neck.

Thrust the jaw upward without moving the head or neck to lift the jaw and open the airway.

If this is successful, then the patient can be rolled into the recovery position as necessary.

Provide Comfort

Remember that MCC members can be of great value to injured and emotional patients simply by offering comfort and support. **No special skill is needed, just a calm and reassuring presence.** Asking simple questions such as:

- How can I help?
- What do you need?
- What happened?

- May I pray with you?

Let them know what is going to happen next, like you are going to be moving them or cleaning the wounds. Keep them warm, maintain eye contact. **BE PATIENT**. Let them know if you need to help someone else once they are settled.

Exercises for Positions

- Work in pairs
- Have one person to be the patient and lie on the floor on their back with eyes closed.
- Assume the person is unconscious, but breathing.
- Place the patient into the recovery position.

If a mannequin is available, practice jaw thrust maneuvers. (An alert patient is not able to let you move their jaw easily). Remember, if CPR is needed it may be better to pray for help and guidance, and then move on to help another survivor.

Disaster First Aid Part 3: Opening the Airway


For course certification, the form must be filled out.


Member Name (Print) _____ Instructor Name (Print) _____


Member Position Number _____ Instructor Position Number _____


Member FEMA SID _____ Instructor FEMA SID _____

Date of Instruction _____


 Understand the basic respiratory system anatomy as it applies to the airway.

 Define the source of the most common airway obstruction.

 Define the tripod position for breathing.

 Perform placing a patient into the recovery position.

_____ Understand the technique of the jaw-thrust maneuver.

 Know the different ways to provide comfort.

With a complete sheet of initials, the instructor's signature signifies certification of completion for the Disaster First Aid Part 3: Opening the airway.

Instructor Signature _____