

Basic Life Support

Basic Life Support (BLS) is a specific level of prehospital medical care provided by trained responders, including emergency medical technicians, in the absence of advanced medical care.

Basic Life Support consists of a number of life-saving techniques focused on the "ABC"s of prehospital emergency care:

- * Airway: the protection and maintenance of patient airway including the use of airway adjuncts such as an oral or nasal airway
- * Breathing: the actual flow of air through respiration, natural or artificial respiration, often assisted by emergency oxygen
- * Circulation: the movement of blood through the beating of the heart or the emergency measure of CPR

BLS may also include considerations of patient transport such as the protection of the cervical spine and avoiding additional injuries through splinting and immobilization.

BLS generally does not include the use of drugs or invasive skills, and can be contrasted with the provision of Advanced cardiac life support (ACLS). Most laypersons can master BLS skill after attending a short course. Firefighters and police officers are often required to be BLS certified. BLS is also immensely useful for many other professions, such as daycare providers, teachers and security personnel.

CPR provided in the field buys time for higher medical responders to arrive and provide ACLS. For this reason it is essential that any person starting CPR also obtains ACLS support by calling for help via radio using agency policies and procedures and/or using an appropriate emergency telephone number.

An important advance in providing BLS is the availability of the automated external defibrillator or AED, which can be used to deliver defibrillation. This improves survival outcomes in cardiac arrest cases, sometimes dramatically.

New BLS guidelines are published by the American Heart Association in December 2006