

The Washington Post

Making a Smartphone a First Responder

You've sprained your ankle: Ice or heat? A stranger on the bus collapses, unconscious: How well do you remember that CPR class?

In those situations, your phone could be good for something besides calling for help. A new iPhone/iTouch application called Pocket First Aid & CPR (<http://www.jive.me/pocketaid>) includes primers, videos and still images. It's not the first mobile first-aid app, but this one comes from the American Heart Association.

The application is downloadable for \$3.99 from Apple's iTunes store; the AHA hopes to make it available on other mobile devices shortly.

The app includes first-aid checklists, illustrated pages of instructions on hundreds of topics including choking, insect stings, bites, seizures and diabetic emergencies, and instructional videos for a number of events including treating a wound and chest compressions for CPR.

It also has a format for inputting and storing information -- personal doctor, health history, drug allergies, insurance data and emergency contact information -- for you and anyone whose health is important to you.

Chris Lang, an assistant professor of emergency medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine,

says the application is comprehensive, but it should supplement rather than replace first-aid and CPR classes. "The application does have step-by-step instructions, but in many emergencies learning skills for the first time from a cellphone could cost you too much time," Lang says.

Whether or not you've taken first-aid classes, Lang advises familiarizing yourself with with app's offerings when you download it, so you know where to find information rather than, say, clicking through wound-cleaning information when what you need is instructions on coping with an apparent stroke.

A good feature of the new app is that the information is stored in the phone and is therefore available whether or not it's receiving a wireless signal. But, says Lang, the first rule of any life-threatening

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emergency is to call 911.

Oh, and that sprain? The app says to ice it for no more than 20 minutes at a time.

-- **Francesca Lunzer Kritz**

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