



TOWN OF WESTFORD
Health Department
TOWN HALL (Second Floor)
55 Main Street
WESTFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01886
978-692-5509 Fax 978-399-2558



Ask the Nurse February 2026 American Heart Month

In previous *Ask the Nurse* articles we've talked about cholesterol and what blood pressure means, two important factors that directly affect heart health. When cholesterol and blood pressure are not well controlled, they increase the risk of heart attack, stroke, and sudden cardiac arrest.

Heart disease is the number 1 cause of death in both men and women globally according to the American Heart Association.

February is Heart Health Month, a time to focus not only preventing heart disease, but also on knowing what to do in an emergency. That's where Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) comes in. Per the American Heart Association learning CPR can double or triple your chances of survival after a cardiac arrest. While managing cholesterol and blood pressure helps lower risk overtime, CPR is what saves lives in the moment when the heart suddenly stops.

The American Heart Association released updated **2025 CPR Guidelines** in October 2025, which led to updates in Basic Life Support (BLS), Heartsaver CPR, AED, and First Aid courses to reflect the latest life-saving recommendations.

With so many CPR options available, you might be wondering:

- What's the difference between the various CPR classes?
- Which CPR course is the right fit for me?

Here's a quick breakdown:

Basic Life Support (BLS)

BLS is designed for healthcare providers and medical professionals, such as nurses, physicians, and first responders, including paramedics.

Heartsaver CPR Certification

The Heartsaver CPR course is ideal for non-medical professionals who need training for their job or for anyone interested in being prepared to save a life.



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Friends and Family CPR

This class is for individuals who want to learn CPR but do not need an American Heart Association certification card. It is geared toward non-healthcare professionals and focuses on practical everyday response skills.

Hands-Only CPR

Hands-Only CPR focuses on chest compressions without rescue breaths. This method helps manually pump the heart to circulate oxygenated blood to vital organs and is easy to learn and remember in an emergency.

How old do you have to be to learn CPR?

According to the American Heart Association, children as young as nine-years-old can learn CPR. Because sudden cardiac arrest most often occurs outside the hospital-frequently at home. Teaching children this critical skill can potentially save a life. Learning CPR at a young age helps build confidence and gives children essential tools to recognize an emergency and take immediate action.

Taking steps to manage cholesterol and blood pressure can reduce the risk of heart emergencies-and learning CPR prepares you to act if one happens. Both prevention and preparedness are essential parts of protecting heart health in our community.

The Westford Health Department offers CPR classes periodically throughout the year. This February, in recognition of American Heart Month, we offered Basic Life Support (BLS), Heartsaver CPR, and First Aid class for community members and town employees.

Where can I find upcoming classes

Information about upcoming classes is shared on the Westford Health Department website, as well as through the Council on Aging (COA), Fletcher Library, Westford Public School billboard, and Westford CAT.

In addition to CPR training, the Public Health Nurse, Gail Johnson, offers a variety of health education programs throughout the year focused on prevention, preparedness, and overall health and safety of our community. These programs include CPR, Stop the Bleed, Until Help Arrives, Adult & Youth Mental Health First Aid.

For more information about these classes or to learn about upcoming opportunities, please contact the Public Health Nurse at gjohnson@westfordma.gov.

*The information above was taken from various sources, to explain cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). This information is meant to be truthful, accurate, & educational and not meant to misrepresent any article previously written and submitted.
INFORMATIONAL ONLY. NOT MEDICAL ADVICE.

References:

- American Heart Association CPR & First Aid Emergency Cardiovascular Care: <https://cpr.heart.org/en/resources/what-is-cpr>
- American Heart Association: American Heart Month: <https://www.heart.org/en/american-heart-month>
- LearnTastic Oct 29, 2025: <https://learntastic.com/blog/aha-2025-what-s-new-in-cpr-acls-pals-heartsaver>
- HeartCert Training Heroes Every Day: <https://heartcertcpr.com/news/difference-bls-heartsaver-course/>
- American Heart Association, CPR & First Aid Emergency Cardiovascular Care: <https://cpr.heart.org/en/cpr-courses-and-kits/hands-only-cpr>



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- American First Responder Professional Safety Training: <https://americanfirstresponder.com/american-heart-association-heart-saver-friends-family-cpr-classroom-training/>
- American Red Cross Training Services: https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/cpr/performing-cpr/hands-only-cpr?srsId=AfmBOOptmX2_W0ScHYuUafn1-xu5q-0e4crsksbH2kr9fX5o4ByUZNrH
- American CPR Care Association August 6, 2025: <https://cprcare.com/blog/is-there-an-age-limit-for-cpr-certification/>