

Oxygen is essential to life. Every time we breathe in, air containing oxygen enters the lungs. This oxygen is then transferred to the blood, to be transported around the body. Breathing and the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide (a waste product from body tissues) are described as respiration. The structures within the body that enable us to breathe – the air passages and the lungs – together make up the respiratory system, and work with the heart and circulatory system.

Respiration can be impaired in several different ways. The airways may be blocked causing choking or suffocation, the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the lungs may be affected by the inhalation of smoke or fumes, lung function may be impaired by chest injury, or the breathing mechanism may be affected by conditions such as asthma. Anxiety can also cause breathing difficulties. Problems with respiration can be life-threatening and need urgent first aid.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To assess the casualty's condition
- To identify and remove the cause of the problem and provide fresh air
- To comfort and reassure the casualty
- To maintain an open airway, check breathing and be prepared to resuscitate if necessary
- To obtain medical help if necessary. **Call 999/112 for emergency help** if you suspect a serious illness or injury

RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS