Can Basic Life Support Techniques Be Taught to Children Ages 5-8?
by Lewis First MD, MS, Editor in Chief, Pediatrics

Basic life support (BLS) skills are complex, requiring mastery of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and understanding key principles of situational awareness and working together as a team. CPR can usually be taught to children starting at 11 years of age. However, the European Resuscitation Council's campaign "Kids Save Lives," endorsed by the World Health Organization, was designed to teach younger children the proper sequence of CPR to start the process for other rescuers. How can this be done?

Varela-Casal et al (10.1542/peds.2021-051408) report on a cluster randomized trial involving 15 classes of schoolchildren ages 5 to 8 in Spain to determine what learning strategy works best to teach BLS to younger. This fascinating study that used unique learning aids, including a three-dimensional mechanical puzzle called the "Rescube," a storybook that has a cyclical structure called the "Endless Book," a "cuddly toy" to use as the "victim," and a conventional "manikin." Classes were randomized to the Rescube and cuddly toy, the Endless Book and cuddly toy, traditional teaching with the cuddly toy, or traditional teaching with the manikin.

Which group did best? The good news is that all groups were able to learn the BLS sequence but more students in one group succeeded in retaining the information better than the other groups. To find out which one and to get a better understanding of just what these tools looked like link to this study and consider sharing the findings with your local elementary school. The ABCs of BLS may be easy to teach to children you might not have considered as life-savers.