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No knocking on heaven's door with this medic

EMS attendant keeps first aid training biz pumping in North York

By Kelly Gadzala
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UNDER PRESSURE: David Goodman of Heaven Can Wait Emergency First Aid Training works on his CPR with a first aid dummy.

Quick: your daughter's friend is going into anaphylactic shock. She has an EpiPen and you've got to use it now. How do you use it? Just shove it in her stomach, right?

Wrong. You've just discharged the EpiPen contents into your finger by mistake, and you were supposed to be aiming for the child's thigh. Now your friend's daughter could die, and you could lose your finger. That's assuming the child was even going into anaphylactic shock – how do you know? What are the symptoms?

Ask David Goodman of Heaven Can Wait Emergency First Aid Training.

The Toronto paramedic says many people lack the proper training to deal with emergency situations.

"Emergency causes fear and panic," Goodman says. "I've seen people die because (others) don't know what to do."

The emergency training services Goodman offers at his Lesmill Rd. and Hwy. 401 business include CPR and first aid. There are also specialized courses he's developed, like Seniors Aid 101, "Cool" Aid First Aid For Kids, and Anaphylaxis 101: The Magic Pen.

Goodman teaches people to deal with certain situations many may cringe to think of: what do you do when your child is choking? How can you determine if a person is actually going into anaphylactic shock? What's the major sign a person is having a heart attack?

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There are a lot of old wives tales about emergency situations, he says, that he must break down. He mentions one man he saw in a restaurant who patted his child on the back when he saw the child may be choking.

"Not good," Goodman says.

Knocking a choking person on the back can lodge something in the throat that may not have been lodged there in the first pace, he says.

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And it doesn't take long for things to get bad, he adds. If a person's breathing is obstructed by something caught in their throat, that person will be unconscious in 30 seconds to a minute, he says. In four to six minutes, the heart will stop.

In 10 minutes, the person will be brain-dead.

Not one to gloss over fact, Goodman teaches his clients based on his experiences as a paramedic.

"We go to the nitty gritty and we tell you what to do and how to do it."

But rather than scaring people off, Goodman's reality tactics work. Most learners enjoy it when he gives real-life examples, he says, as they stimulate conversation about the topic.

Getting people in the door isn't always easy, though. One of the biggest challenges, he says, is trying to convince people this kind of training is beneficial to them.

"They fear they're going to make (patients) worse."

Plain apathy, he says, and not wanting to think about death are other reasons people don't get emergency training.

Others have told him their wives are trained. But what good will that do when the wife is having a heart attack he asks.

Since CPR standards change and people can forget, Goodman recommends taking a refresher course every year.

He accepts classes of ten or more, corporate and from the general public, both in his training facility and off-site.

And to answer that earlier question, what's the biggest sign a person is having a heart attack?

Goodman is blunt.

"Denial."



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