

2018 Focused Updates to *AHA Guidelines for CPR and ECC* Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



CPR & Emergency Cardiovascular Care

Q: What are the updates as they relate to Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS)?

A: The *2018 American Heart Association Focused Updates on Adult Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support and Pediatric Advanced Life Support* (2018 Focused Updates) include the following:

1. Amiodarone or lidocaine may be considered for Ventricular Fibrillation/pulseless Ventricular Tachycardia (VF/pVT) that is unresponsive to defibrillation. These drugs may be particularly useful for patients with witnessed arrest, for whom time to drug administration may be shorter.
2. Lidocaine has been added to the ACLS Cardiac Arrest Algorithm and the ACLS Cardiac Arrest Circular Algorithm for treatment of shock-refractory VF/pVT.
3. The routine use of Magnesium for cardiac arrest is not recommended in adult patients. Magnesium may be considered for torsades de pointes (i.e., polymorphic VT associated with long QT interval).
4. There is insufficient evidence to support or refute the routine use of a β -blocker early (within the first hour) after return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC).
5. There is insufficient evidence to support or refute the routine use of lidocaine early (within the first hour) after ROSC. In the absence of contraindications, the prophylactic use of lidocaine may be considered in specific circumstances (such as during emergency medical services transport) when treatment of recurrent VF/pVT might prove to be challenging.

Q: What are the new updates as they relate to Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS)?

A: While there are no changes to the depiction of sequences and therapies from the 2015 PALS algorithm, some minor edits have been made to the PALS Cardiac Arrest Algorithm in 2018 to be consistent with language in the ACLS Cardiac Arrest Algorithm.

Q: Will the AHA's CPR and ECC products be changing? Will I need to purchase new products?

A: For these 2018 Focused Updates, there will be no changes to products and no new materials are required.

Q: Is there any new guidance for AHA Instructors based on the 2018 Focused Updates?

A: Yes, based on the 2018 Focused Updates, the AHA offers the following guidance for ACLS, ACLS for Experienced Providers (ACLS EP), and PALS Instructors:

- Instructors may allow students to practice *using either amiodarone or lidocaine* during CPR in ACLS, ACLS EP, and PALS courses, consistent with the student's local protocol.
- For testing purposes, AHA Instructors will continue to use the ACLS and PALS Skills Testing Checklists and the Skills Testing Critical Skills Descriptors.

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- Q: Why did the AHA move to a continuous evidence evaluation process and more frequent focused updates?
- A: Until 2017, the *AHA Guidelines for CPR and ECC* had been updated every five years. In 2017, the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (ILCOR) and the AHA moved to a continuous evidence evaluation process and more frequent focused updates. Continuous evidence evaluation allows the rigor of a comprehensive review and expert consensus in as close to real time as possible.
- Q: Does this mean that my courses and materials may change more frequently than every five years?
- A: Product and training updates will depend on the nature of the changes in the focused updates, and the AHA will review how new recommendations should be implemented as they arise. The AHA does not expect to create all new products with every focused update.
- Q: When will these recommendations take effect?
- A: The *2018 American Heart Association Focused Updates on Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support* were published on November 5, 2018.
- Q: How can I get a copy of the new 2018 Focused Updates?
- A: The updated AHA ECC Guidelines website includes the new 2018 Focused Updates. Visit [ECCguidelines.Heart.org](https://www.heart.org/ECCguidelines.Heart.org) to view the full updates in *Circulation*, and for an FAQ and downloadable “highlights” document in PDF format. The highlights document is available in 16 languages.