

# The CPR Teddy Bear

Words • Sharon Tabor Warren

*The teddy bear has long been a source of comfort for infants and children alike. Now, thanks to some clever technology and creative ingenuity, the cuddly toy can also take on another role: lifesaver.*

In 2003, Elroy Cantrell, MD, an emergency room physician, and his daughter, Melissa Waugh, a healthcare attorney, opened Trainikins in Lynchburg. Trainikins' purpose is to develop and manufacture unique CPR practice aids.

Among Trainikins' many products, perhaps the one that stands out the most is CPR teddy. At first glance, CPR teddy looks like any ordinary teddy bear. But ordinary it is not. In addition to being a cuddly comforter, CPR teddy also serves as an infant and children CPR refresher course for parents, grandparents and babysitters.

With the squeeze of his right paw, CPR teddy begins to give you CPR instructions for infants; his left paw offers CPR instructions for children up to eight years of age. He also tells you what to do in the event your infant or child is choking. CPR teddy comes with a training DVD video.

The red satin heart on his chest is the location used during the CPR process, and Teddy helps with the count. Push too hard and his bow tie lights red. It is calibrated specifically for use on infants or children because the proper pressure for each is different. Parents also breathe into Teddy's plastic mask to inflate pockets in his chest, enabling them to get a feel for how to monitor the chest while they maintain the compression count. All instructions are within the 2005 American Heart Association's guidelines.

*Virginia Baptist Hospital in Lynchburg began giving parents of all infants in the intensive care nursery these teaching toys two years ago. It was the first hospital nationally to do so. Weekly classes are offered for new parents and in some cases the course is required before the child is sent home.*

Both Dr. Cantrall and Waugh recognized that CPR performed incorrectly does not save a life and that most people who take a CPR class only retain 30 percent of what they have learned after 90 days. Waugh says the bear is a way to encourage parents, other family members and childcare providers to practice the skills away from the classroom.

According to Waugh, Teddy is a classic motif and is gender, race and culturally neutral. The choice of a bear as opposed to something that looks like a baby was carefully considered by Cantrell and Waugh. The product needs to be displayed on a regular basis and a bear is a natural fit to sit in a nursery as a constant reminder.

“He has a bit of a well-loved look; we wanted this to be a friend: warm and snuggly,” says Waugh. “For some parents the idea of practicing CPR on something that resembles their own child is psychologically difficult. A bear is not “scary” and men relate better to a teddy bear, as opposed to a baby doll.”

Waugh, who practiced healthcare law in the Washington, DC area before moving to Lynchburg, is the voice of the bear.

Knowing that some people may need more prompting to remember to practice, they also initiated the CPR Teddy Reminder Program. Users can sign up to receive quarterly reminders either by e-mail or postcard to practice with CPR Teddy.

Today, hospitals across the United States and Canada provide the bear to parents. A Japanese version is also available. ■

*CPR teddy can be purchased via the Internet at [www.cprteddy.com](http://www.cprteddy.com).*

