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## LATERAL VS. 3/4-PRONE

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One of the most common misconceptions in NLS classes, recerts, etc. is that of victim positioning. Many people seem to think that lateral, recovery, 3/4 prone, and semi-prone are all the same position - simply on the side. This is incorrect. **Lateral position** is used when ventilating a non-breathing victim. The airway is manually maintained and hyperextended by the rescuer. If one were to draw an imaginary line down the body of someone in lateral position it would go directly through their mouth down their throat and into their lungs. The head usually rests on an extended arm as shown in the picture.



**LATERAL  
POSITION**

**Recovery** aka **3/4 Prone** aka **Semi-prone** are synonyms of the same position. This is the position in which an unconscious victim should be placed to *recover*. In other words, their ABC's are stable and the rescuer is simply waiting for EMS to arrive.



**RECOVERY /  
3/4-PRONE/  
SEMI-PRONE  
POSITION**

The example I always use to clarify these positions is vomiting. Say, for example, you are a rescuer all by yourself and you come across an adult victim. Once determining they are unconscious the standard is to leave the victim in recovery and call EMS yourself. If you were to leave the victim in a lateral position, it is very possible that the victim's head could slightly fall back behind the arm and they could vomit. This would cause aspiration of the vomit possibly killing the patient. However, if we correctly place this same victim into a 3/4 prone position (see picture) before leaving, even if the victim vomits, they will vomit towards the ground and there will be no chance of creating airway or breathing complications. It is very important that students at every level are familiar with this. If you teach your Bronze Medallion class to put all victims into a lateral position (or you say "3/4 prone" but really are teaching a lateral position) you create the opportunity to the above described situation. Students and instructors should be very clear about this point.