



FACTS



SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AEDs

Cardiac arrest is when the heart stops beating and the victim goes unconscious, is not breathing and has no signs of circulation. This can strike anyone, anywhere, at any time, and in most cases, without warning.

Without treatment victims have only minutes to live. With quick response, this condition is readily treatable with survival rates well over 50%. Unfortunately most of the time, the necessary life-saving equipment does not arrive in time. As a result typical survival rates in Ireland are only 1%.

6,400 *This is the estimated number of people who die each year in Ireland from out of hospital cardiac arrest.*

18 *This is the estimated number of people who die each day in Ireland from out of hospital cardiac arrest.*

3 *In your lifetime, you may have three to four opportunities to perform CPR resuscitation on a victim. If you have done a first aid course or are a health care professional your chances increase significantly, because you are more likely to give assistance.*

1% *Currently in Ireland only 1% of cardiac arrest victims survive.*

70% *If an AED is used on a victim within 3 minutes of going into cardiac arrest they have a 70% chance of surviving.*

7%-10% *Each minute that passes before an AED is used the persons chance of surviving is reduced by 7%-10% even with CPR resuscitation been performed.*

Question: What is an AED?

Answer: AED stands for “Automatic External Defibrillator.” An AED is used to administer an electric shock to a person who is having a cardiac arrest. AEDs are designed to allow non-medical personnel to save lives.

Question: How does an AED work?

Answer: Two pads, connected to the AED, are placed on the patient's chest. A computer inside the AED analyses the patient's heart rhythm and determines if a shock is required to save the victim. If a shock is required, the AED uses voice instructions to guide the user through saving the person's life.

Question: Why do we need AEDs?

Answer: AEDs save lives. When a person has a sudden cardiac arrest (“SCA”), their heart's regular rhythm becomes chaotic or arrhythmic. Every minute that the heart is not beating lowers the odds of survival by 7% to 10%. After 10 minutes without defibrillation very few people survive.

Question: What is Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)?

Answer: Sudden cardiac arrest is when the heart's normal rhythm suddenly becomes chaotic. The heart can no longer pump the blood effectively and the victim collapses, stops breathing, becomes unresponsive, and has no detectable pulse. When used on a victim of SCA, the AED can be used to administer a life-saving electric shock that restores the heart's rhythm to normal.

Question: Is SCA the same as a heart attack?

Answer: No. Both the heart attack (myocardial infarction) and a sudden cardiac arrest have to do with the heart, but they are different problems. SCA is an electrical problem; a heart attack is a “plumbing” problem. Sometimes a heart attack, which may not be fatal in itself, can trigger a sudden cardiac arrest.

Question: Who can have a SCA?

Answer: Anyone, anytime. Children can have SCAs, teenagers can have SCAs, athletes can have SCAs, old people can have SCAs. Although the risk of SCA increases with age and in people with heart problems, a large percentage of the victims are people with no known risk factors.

Question: What does the Irish Heart Foundation and the American Heart Association say about AEDs?

Answer: The IHF strongly supports having AEDs in public areas such as sports arenas, office complexes, schools, doctors' offices, shopping centres, golf courses, airports, and other public places. The IHF also advocates that all police and fire and rescue vehicles be equipped with an AED.

Question: What is the recommended treatment for SCA?

Answer: Defibrillation is the only treatment proven to restore a normal heart rhythm.

Question: How much time do I have to respond if someone has a sudden cardiac arrest?

Answer: Only minutes. Defibrillate within 3 minutes and the chances of survival are 70%. After 10 minutes, the chances of survival are only 1%.

Question: I know CPR; wouldn't it help?

Answer: CPR only buys a little more time – potentially giving the victim a small amount of extra time until a defibrillator arrives. But SCA ultimately requires a shock to restore a normal heart rhythm. As a result, most CPR training now also includes AED training.

Question: Is an AED complicated to use?

Answer: AEDs are very easy to use. An AED can be used by practically anyone who has been shown what to do. In fact, there are a number cases where people with no training at all have saved lives.

Question: Can a non-medical person make a mistake when using an AED?

Answer: No, AEDs are safe to use by anyone who has been shown how to use them. The AEDs voice guides the rescuer through the steps involved in saving someone; for example, “apply pads to patient's bare chest” (the pads themselves have pictures of where they should be placed) and “press red shock button.” Furthermore, safeguards have been designed into the unit precisely so that non-medical responders can't use the AED to shock someone who doesn't need a shock.

Question: Can the AED itself make a mistake?

Answer: No, studies show that AEDs interpret the victim's heart rhythm more quickly and accurately than many trained emergency professionals. If the AED determines that no shock is needed, it will not allow a shock to be given.

Question: What else do I need to do to keep my AED in working order?

Answer: The pad package must be replaced every two years. Otherwise, the AED performs automatic self-checks on a regular basis to test its operational readiness. If anything is not fully functional, the unit will make a loud chirp and flash a red light warning the owner that servicing may be required.