



# Health Bulletin



## Reducing Sudden Cardiac Arrest Deaths

(NAPSA)—Every day, more than 600 Americans suffer sudden cardiac arrest, which claims 250,000 lives a year in the U.S. alone. But now, easy to use technology can put the power to save lives in the hands of ordinary people.

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is not the same thing as a heart attack, although a person suffering a heart attack has an increased risk of SCA. While heart attacks occur when blood vessels clog and blood supply is cut off from the heart, sudden cardiac arrest is actually an electrical problem that causes the heart to stop beating properly.

When SCA happens, blood flow to the rest of the body stops. The victim will typically be unconscious, have no signs of circulation (e.g. no pulse), and not be breathing. Unless the victim's heart is shocked into beating properly again, death is nearly certain. However, recent studies have shown that up to 70 percent of people who suffer a witnessed incident of sudden cardiac arrest can survive if a device called a defibrillator is used within three minutes.

Defibrillation is the only known treatment for this condition and automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) are the quickest and most efficient way to reach individuals with this life-saving therapy.



**Automatic external defibrillators are designed to help minimally trained laypeople save lives.**

Unlike defibrillators intended for use by health professionals (and the ones most often seen on TV), AEDs are designed to allow nearly anyone with a minimal amount of training to respond to emergencies, particularly sudden cardiac arrest.

AEDs are about the size of a lunch box, with adhesive pads that deliver a lifesaving pulse of electrical energy to the chest, interrupting the abnormal rhythm and helping to restore the heart's natural rhythm.

The devices are pre-programmed with the expertise needed to analyze the heart's electrical function. They also use voice prompts and pictograms or screen displays to instruct the user on how to operate the device.

A wide variety of people in the U.S. and around the world already use AEDs, including police and security officers, firefighters, athletic trainers, flight attendants and lifeguards. Newly developed AEDs offer greater ease of use and are designed to allow trained laypersons to respond to cardiac emergencies virtually anywhere.

Training programs are very important though and only one AED manufacturer offers a training program for home use. Medtronic Physio-Control, creator of the first fully automatic external defibrillator, offers the LIFEPAK<sup>®</sup> CR Plus Home Solution along with a training program, registration, maintenance, medical direction, 24-hour hotline and post event counseling for family members. After completing a short (usually four hours) training course that covers both AED use and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), practically anyone can use an AED. When used properly and with appropriate precautions, AEDs are simple to operate and pose no risk to either the rescuer or the patient.

For more information on starting a defibrillation program in your workplace or community, call the National Center for Early Defibrillation's toll-free consumer resource hotline at 1-866-AED-INFO or visit [www.aedhelp.com](http://www.aedhelp.com).