

Health Awareness



Four Steps To Stay Heart Healthy During Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Month

(NAPSA)—According to the American Heart Association, sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) kills over 350,000 people each year in the United States—more than lung cancer, breast cancer and HIV/AIDS combined.

October is SCA Awareness Month, so take time to learn about SCA: a sudden loss of heart function caused by rapid or chaotic activity in the heart's electrical system.

While SCA is commonly mistaken for a heart attack, they are not the same. SCA's chaotic electrical activity causes the heart to stop beating, so blood isn't pumped to the rest of the body. A heart attack is a "plumbing" issue caused by a blocked vessel, which then leads to loss of blood supply to a portion of the heart muscle.

Fortunately, many deaths from SCA are preventable. SCA can be reversible if it is treated within minutes through the delivery of a life-saving electrical shock, as reported in an Indian Pacing and Electrophysiology Journal study. A shock can be delivered either with automated external defibrillators (AED), which are increasingly available in public locations, or with an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD). These stopwatch-sized devices are implanted into the chest to continuously monitor the heart and deliver shocks when necessary to restore a normal heartbeat. ICDs are 98 percent effective in treating dangerously fast heart rhythms that can lead to SCA, according to the Journal of the American College of Cardiology; however, they are underutilized and many people who need them do not get them.



It's a good idea to take to heart all the information you can about your risk for sudden cardiac arrest.

Now that you have background about SCA, follow these steps to better understand your risk and prevent SCA:

1. Evaluate your risk factors, such as a family history of heart disease, previous heart attack or heart failure, and chest pain.
2. Create a list of questions to ask your doctor and make an appointment to discuss and assess your risk.
3. If ordered by your doctor, take one or more of the following diagnostic tests: echocardiogram, electrocardiogram (ECG), chest X-ray, exercise test or cardiac catheterization.
4. If you are at risk of SCA, discuss all potential treatment options with your physician, including the potential benefits of an ICD.

Remember, SCA can happen to a person of any age, race or gender, so everyone should take time to discuss the risk with a physician. To learn more, visit www.asktheicd.com/sca.