

Safety-Gram

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What Is An AED Anyway?

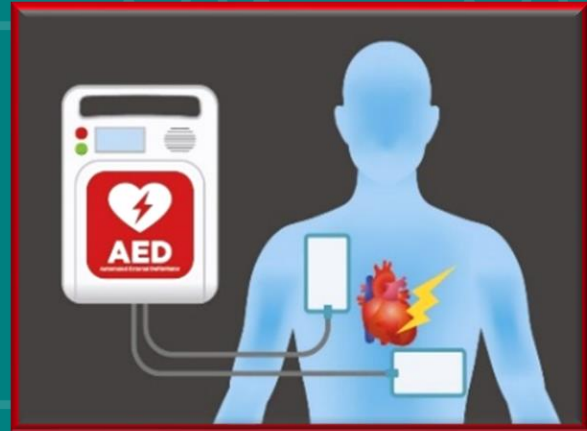
The list of medical emergencies we can experience in life is a long one. Heart attacks and sudden cardiac arrest are extremely common. One life-saving tool that can prevent death resulting from a heart emergency is an automated external defibrillator, or AED.



So What IS an AED?

Often stored in a wall-mounted box, an Automated External Defibrillator is a portable device with adhesive electrodes that attach to the victim's chest. The AED checks a victim's heart rhythm and calculates whether defibrillation is needed.

The shock momentarily stuns the heart and stops all activity, giving the heart the chance to resume beating effectively.



Important Points for AED Use:

- **Call 911 immediately** if a victim is experiencing a heart emergency. They will need to be transported to a hospital for follow-up care.
- Don't delay in having the AED evaluate the victim. If defibrillated promptly, an adult's chance of survival is close to 90 percent. If it is delayed by more than 10 minutes, their chance of survival is less than 5 percent.
- Because of the ease of use, anyone can use an AED. Voice prompts guide the user through the process. However, if someone with training is present, they should be the one to use the AED on a victim.
- Regular inspections with documentation of AEDs are critical. Dead batteries are a common problem with AEDs, so check the manufacturer's literature on how often to replace them (generally every 2 to 4 years).

Summary:

Most people are familiar with AEDs and probably have them in their place of work, but may not understand how they function. It is critical that everyone is at least familiar with how they work and in what situations they should be used. AEDs are often the only chance that a victim of sudden cardiac arrest will survive.

Discussion Points:

- Where is the closest AED in your work area?
- Do you need to be a certified medical professional to operate an AED?
- Have you been trained to use an AED?
- Do you have any apprehension about using an AED? Why or why not?