



Defibrillators and sudden cardiac arrest

Here's what you need to know

This easy-to-use guide has been developed for you by St John Ambulance Australia (NSW) – the leaders in first aid.

The purpose of this guide is to equip you with the knowledge and confidence to respond in an emergency.

In it you'll find useful information about when and how to use a defibrillator in the event of a sudden cardiac arrest.

Your actions could mean the difference between life and death.



*Did you know
AED stands for
Automated External
Defibrillator?*





Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere. Around 20,000¹ Australians suffer a sudden cardiac arrest outside a hospital every year.

When sudden cardiac arrest strikes, a defibrillator can mean the difference between life and death.

What is sudden cardiac arrest?

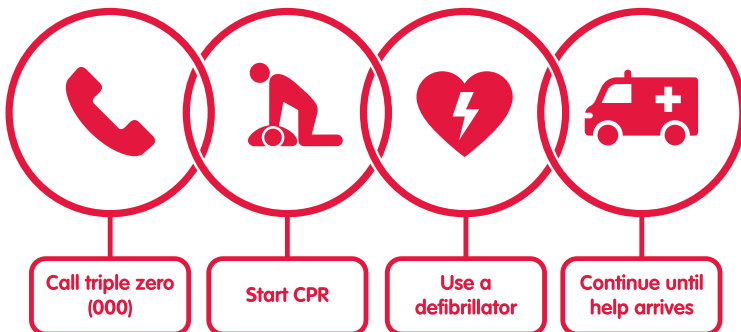
Sudden cardiac arrest is usually caused by an irregularity in the electrical activity in the heart, which causes the heart to suddenly stop beating.

Sudden cardiac arrest vs heart attack	
Sudden cardiac arrest	Heart attack
When the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops functioning	When an artery is blocked and restricts blood flow to the heart
Collapse	Chest pain
Unconscious	Fatigue
Not breathing	Weakness
No pulse	Nausea
	Difficulty breathing

²Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute

What to do: sudden cardiac arrest

If a sudden cardiac arrest occurs, the first few minutes are critical. The best chance of survival comes from taking action immediately:



When to use a defibrillator



Each minute without a defibrillator decreases chances of survival by 10%.¹



You should use a defibrillator when:

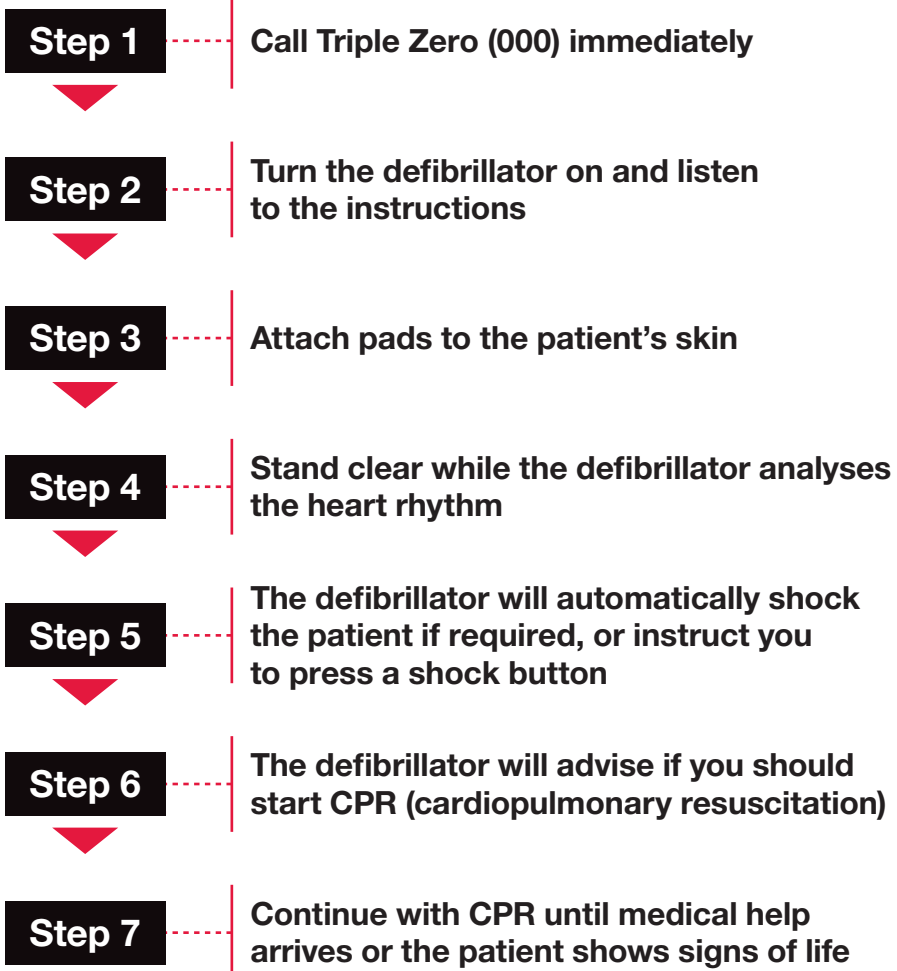
- Unconscious
- Not breathing at all or not breathing normally

¹ Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute

How does a defibrillator work?

While there are a number of different defibrillator models, they all work in essentially the same way.

You don't need training to use one. The machine gives clear spoken instructions – all you have to do is follow them. It also won't shock someone unless they need it.



Mythbusters



Did you know?

- i** A defibrillator will not shock someone if they don't need it
- i** You cannot kill someone using a defibrillator
- i** You do not need training to use a defibrillator
- i** A defibrillator will only shock someone if they've had a sudden cardiac arrest and their heart is not beating
- i** Using a defibrillator in the rain will not electrocute you
- i** Defibrillators can be used on children
- i** You should use a defibrillator even if an ambulance is on its way



Despite what some think, you cannot be held legally liable if you attempt first aid and the patient does not survive or has adverse effects. In Australia (and many other countries) we have Good Samaritan laws protecting those who attempt to help, as long as they don't do anything reckless.

A life saved

“I looked at Naomi’s face. Her lips were blue. There was no pulse,” recalls St John NSW volunteer Damien.

Naomi was leaving an ice hockey match with her husband and some friends when she suddenly collapsed. Naomi was suffering a sudden cardiac arrest.

Damien was one of the St John NSW volunteers present at the game who were called to scene, where they commenced CPR immediately and applied a defibrillator. A total of four shocks were administered before she was taken to hospital.

Naomi is incredibly grateful for the quick thinking actions of the volunteers and the fact that there was a publicly accessible defibrillator nearby. “All I can do is say thank you. I got my life back. It was a gift!” she says.



About us

St John Ambulance (NSW) has been working with and making a difference in communities across NSW for over 130 years to save lives through first aid.

ShockingAUS is a campaign developed by St John Ambulance (NSW) to help raise awareness about the importance of defibrillators in the event of a sudden cardiac arrest – one of the leading causes of death in Australia.

Help us create safer communities.

Having defibrillators located in publicly accessible areas like workplaces, sporting grounds, shopping centres, vehicles and even homes can mean the difference between life and death.

Get in touch with us to buy a defibrillator, book first aid training or learn more.



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