

# AED Fast Facts

December 17, 2008 - #18

## An E-mail Promoting Awareness of Automated External Defibrillators

Information presented to complement an established AED Program

**Sudden Cardiac Arrest Defined:** “Cardiac Arrest is the sudden, abrupt loss of heart function. The victim may or may not have diagnosed heart disease. It’s also called unexpected cardiac arrest. Sudden death (also called sudden cardiac death) occurs within minutes after symptoms appear.

The most common underlying reason for patients to die suddenly from cardiac arrest is coronary heart disease. Most cardiac arrests that lead to sudden death occur when the electrical impulses in the diseased heart become rapid (ventricular tachycardia) or chaotic (ventricular fibrillation) or both. This irregular heart rhythm (arrhythmia) causes the heart to suddenly stop beating. Some cardiac arrests are due to extreme slowing of the heart. This is called bradycardia.

Other factors besides heart disease and heart attack can cause cardiac arrest. They include respiratory arrest, electrocution, drowning, choking and trauma. Cardiac arrest can also occur without any known cause.” -*American Heart Association :www.americanheart.org/presenter./html?identifier=448*

**Potential Signs of Sudden Cardiac Arrest:** The victim becomes **Unconscious and Stops Breathing Normally.**

**Gasps Are Not Breaths:** “In the first few minutes after sudden cardiac arrest, a victim may only gasp. Gasp is not breathing. If the victim gasps when you open the airway to check breathing, continue the steps of CPR. The victim is likely to need all the steps of CPR.” *American Heart Association Heartsaver AED Student Handbook pg 18.*

**Convulsions or Seizures:** Eyewitness accounts of a sudden cardiac arrest sometimes describe the victim experiencing seizures or convulsions. These reactions may occur as part of the brain’s reaction to the lack of oxygen. If one is experiencing convulsions or seizures call 911 and send someone for an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). If these symptoms accompany unconsciousness and abnormal breathing, implement the AHA’s “Chain of Survival”.

### **Sudden Cardiac Arrest Statistics:**

- Sudden Cardiac Arrest Death occurs over 900 times per day in the United States. The risk in adults is estimated to be about 1 in 1000 adults 35 years of age and older per year. *American Heart Association*
- 185 Sudden Cardiac Deaths of Michigan Residence Aged 5 to 19 Years from 1999 thru 2006. *Michigan Dept of Community Health*

### **Headlines:**

**Holland Teen Who Collapsed During Basketball Scrimmage Gets Defibrillator, Makes Quick Recovery**

*Grand Rapids Press December 3, 2008*

### **American Heart Association Chain of Survival:**

1. Early 911
2. Early CPR
3. Early Defibrillation
4. Early Advance Life Support



**HeartAED**   
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**Have a Safe and Happy  
Holiday Season**

