

AEDs: Best Practices

With more than 350,000 cardiac arrest incidents occurring outside of hospital settings each year, the American Heart Association (AHA) has identified sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) as a leading cause of death in the United States. Less than 10 percent of these SCA victims survive and for every minute that a victim goes without defibrillation, their chance of survival decreases by 7 to 10 percent¹. It is important for companies and organizations to place automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) in key locations and to implement an AED program so that employees are trained to respond to cardiac arrest emergencies.

Purpose of AED Programs

Every AED program aims to deliver defibrillation to a cardiac arrest victim in the first three to five minutes after collapse. Defibrillation then delivers an electronic shock to the heart, allowing the victims' heart to return to a normal heart rhythm. An AED will not deliver a shock to a victim if they do not need one. With the implementation of an AED program, a person will be equipped and prepared to save the life of a co-worker, family member, friend, and stranger.

Using an AED

AEDs should be simple and easy to use. As you'll see from a review of procedures recommended by the American Red Cross, the following AED steps should be used when caring for an adult²:

Start by checking the scene and ensuring that the person needs help, if available you should ask a bystander to call 9-1-1 for help.

1. Turn on the AED and follow the visual and/or audio prompts.
2. Open the person's shirt and wipe his or her bare chest dry. If the person is wearing any medication patches, you should use a gloved (if possible) hand to remove the patches before wiping the person's chest.
3. Attach the AED pads, and plug in the connector (if necessary).
4. Make sure no one is, including you, touching the person. Tell everyone to "stand clear."
5. Push the "analyze" button (if necessary) and allow the AED to analyze the person's heart rhythm.
6. If the AED recommends that you deliver a shock to the person, make sure that no one, including you, is touching the person – and tell everyone to "stand clear." Once clear, press the "shock" button.
7. Begin CPR after delivering the shock. Or, if no shock is advised, begin CPR. Perform 2 minutes (about 5 cycles) of CPR and continue to follow the AED's prompts. If you notice obvious signs of life, discontinue CPR and monitor breathing for any changes in condition.

AED Safety Precautions

¹ https://cpr.heart.org/AHA/ECC/CPRAndECC/Programs/AEDImplementation/UCM_473198_AED-Implementation.jsp

² <https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/aed/using-an-aed/aed-steps>

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- Make sure no one touches the victim while the AED analyzes or delivers a shock.
- When prompted by the AED to deliver a shock, give a loud audible “CLEAR!”
- If the victim has a medically implanted device, position the AED pad at least one inch away from said device (i.e. pacemaker).
- Chest hair limits the contact between the AED pads and the skin and can prevent the AED from functioning properly. If available, use a razor to shave the chest in the area where the pad will be placed.

Maintenance and Troubleshooting

- Place AEDs in visible and accessible areas such as near elevators, cafeterias, main reception areas, in secured or restricted access areas, and on walls in main corridors.
- It is important to implement an ongoing maintenance routine of the AEDs. Check the manufacturer’s guidelines for routine procedures.
- If a problem is detected by the AED, you will be prompted to complete troubleshooting procedures.

Developing a Training Plan

The American Heart Association recommends AED users to be trained in CPR and the use of AEDs. Raising awareness of the AED program within an organization will promote faster and positive responses to emergency situations. This can be achieved through company newsletters, signage, posters, and identification of where AED devices are located.

Getting Certified in CPR and AED

If you're looking for certification options, ACE has an American Heart Association course for you. The eight-hour Heartsaver First Aid with CPR and AED course is offered four times a year at select cities throughout the country and is taught by ACE-certified instructors. The certificate is valid for two years.

For additional resources on AEDs, please visit the OSHA and American Heart Association websites:

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/aed/aeds_workplace.html

https://cpr.heart.org/AHA/ECC/CPRAndECC/Programs/AEDImplementation/UCM_473198_AED-Implementation.jsp

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