

FAST FACTS ON SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST (SCA)

- SCA is a leading cause of death in the United States, claiming more than 250,000 lives per year.
- That's a life every two minutes, or over 650 SCA-related deaths each day.
- This number is greater than the number of deaths each year from breast cancer, lung cancer, stroke or AIDS.
- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in the U.S. and most deaths from CVD are attributable to sudden cardiac arrest.
- SCA occurs abruptly and without warning – It is when the heart suddenly stops beating, so no blood can be pumped to the rest of the body – In essence, the heart's electrical system stops working.
 - Contrary to widespread belief – SCA is NOT the same as a heart attack. A heart attack, also called a myocardial infarction, is when a blockage in a blood vessel interrupts the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart, causing the heart muscle to die.
 - If you think of your heart as a house – SCA would be a problem with the electricity; a Heart Attack would be a problem with the plumbing.
- SCA is extremely deadly, with a mortality rate of approximately 95%.
- To have a chance of surviving, victims of SCA must receive a life-saving defibrillation within the first 4 – 6 minutes of an attack, when brain and permanent death start to occur.
- Certain segments of the population are particularly at risk:
 - Medical studies have shown that women have less chance of recovering from SCA than men, and in fact, SCA deaths among women ages 35 – 44 have increased over the past several years but not for men.
 - African Americans are more likely to have SCA than Caucasians and have less than a 1 percent chance of surviving, versus a 5 percent chance in the general population.
- 2/3 of SCA deaths occur in people without any prior indications of heart disease.
- Life-saving treatments for SCA are effective if they can be administered:
 - Implantable Cardiac Defibrillators (ICDs) are 98% effective at protecting those at risk for SCA, but only 35% of patients who could be helped by one, have them.
 - Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) can increase the survival rate for SCA up to 90% by delivering a life-saving shock within the first few minutes of an attack, but they are still not widely available and people often do not know how to use them.

