



Heart Arrhythmias
Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA)

This is a condition where the heart unexpectedly stops beating. This is due to a problem with the heart's electrical system, which causes an arrhythmia that leads to SCA. It is unpredictable and can occur suddenly. Most people who have SCA will lose consciousness and die from it, usually within minutes.

Symptoms include:

- Loss of consciousness
- Lack of pulse
- The person stops breathing
- Abnormal heart rhythm

Sometimes other symptoms may occur before sudden cardiac arrest. These can include:



- Discomfort or crushing pain in the chest



- Shortness of breath



- Dizziness or weakness





- Racing heart beat

However, SCA usually occurs without warning, and the person always loses consciousness once it occurs.

When someone experiences SCA, emergency treatment is needed. The only way to re-establish the heart's rhythm is by defibrillation (applying an electric shock), together with cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). An automated external defibrillator (AED) is a portable device that checks the rhythm of the heart, prompting the user to deliver a shock if needed. An AED is used to defibrillate the patient and restore the heart's rhythm. If you survive an SCA, you will most likely need a hospital stay for further care.



Hearts4heart supports, educates and advocates for Australians living with atrial fibrillation and other heart conditions. Join our community and the conversation.

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