

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE

Why did this happen to you?

We may not know. What we do know is that Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere.

It happened to us:

- At home, asleep
- At a friend's house
- In my yard
- At the grocery store
- In my car
- On an airplane
- In the Emergency Room
- At a softball game
- Shoveling snow
- In a meeting
- At school
- On the athletic field

You aren't alone. We've been there.
We survived, and now we've made it
our mission to help you.

Cardiac Arrest strikes immediately and without warning.

Here are the signs:

- ◆ Sudden loss of responsiveness
- ◆ No normal breathing

If these signs of cardiac arrest are present, tell someone to call 9-1-1 and get an AED (if one is available) and *you begin CPR immediately*.

If you are alone with an adult who has these signs of cardiac arrest, call 9-1-1 and get an AED (if one is available) before you begin CPR. Use an AED as soon as it arrives.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help.

- ◆ **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- ◆ **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- ◆ **Shortness of breath** with or without chest discomfort.
- ◆ **Other signs** may include cold sweats, nausea or lightheadedness.

Learn the signs, but remember this: Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, have it checked out. Minutes matter! Fast action can save lives — maybe your own. Don't wait more than five minutes to call 9-1-1 or your emergency response number.

Calling 9-1-1 is almost always the fastest way to get lifesaving treatment. Emergency medical services staff can begin treatment when they arrive — up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car.



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What to expect after Sudden Cardiac Arrest



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What to expect *after* Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Over 40 Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) Survivors have come together to provide you with information, guidance, personal stories and support as you and your family start your journey *after* SCA. Likely you've already spent time in the hospital, you may be in cardiac rehab, or your SCA event may have been years ago. Our hope is to help answer questions, prepare you for the next steps, and guide you to a healthy place where you can start to heal.

SCA Possible Treatment Events

- ◆ Emergency Room
- ◆ Angiogram
- ◆ Stress test
- ◆ Echocardiogram
- ◆ ICD placement surgery and/or Stent catheterization (Angioplasty) and/or Cooling
- ◆ ICU (2-3 days)
- ◆ Cardiac Unit (2-3 days)
- ◆ Follow up Stress Test and Echocardiogram
- ◆ Consult about Medication/Dietary
- ◆ Home or Rehab Center
- ◆ Join MN SCA Survivors Network
- ◆ Cardiac Rehab 3/week for 6 weeks
- ◆ Resume *NEW* life!

Please refer to a Physician, Cardiologist, Cardiac Rehab Specialist, or other Healthcare Provider if you have questions about any of these steps.

"After my SCA I really became more relieved by seeking the company of others having similar SCA attacks. Also, I sought out time with the people that understood it's effects etc...like EMT, Paramedics, nurses and heart specialists. They all helped me better understand and deal with my condition as I began the long process of healing."

-Gene Johnson, SCA survivor 9/11/2002

"A day doesn't pass that I am not keenly aware of how fortunate I am to have survived such a killer. Most people don't live to see another day"

-Dale Wakasaugi, SCA survivor 12/13/2007

Potential Challenges

Many SCA Survivors face any number of challenges after their SCA. These are some examples of things that others have dealt with:

Physical limitations: Slower movement due to pain is common. So are weight restrictions, lifting restrictions, and driving restrictions.

Short term memory loss: The average is 1 week to 6 weeks; though others have experienced this indefinitely.

Diet changes: Sodium restrictions are common, as well as lower fat and higher fiber. This is a learning process. Learn to read labels on everything.

Multiple Medications: Some survivors take only a few medications but most are on multiple medications. Having one weekly pill box for morning and one for evening makes it much easier to manage.

Depression/Anxiety: Even though you are thankful to be alive, your life has changed in a big way and struggling with depression or anxiety is normal. Talk to a family member or someone you trust. You may also need to talk with your doctor about counseling or medication.

Fear of the unknown: The biggest fear is that this might happen again. The reality is that it could. The best advice we can give is to become educated about SCA, the devices you may have implanted (i.e. stents, ICD), and encourage your family members to learn CPR and how to use an AED.

Going back to work: Most of us can tell you that you may be looked at differently by employers, co-workers, etc. Some people will try and be compassionate for your situation. Others will turn and run. Don't take this personally, they probably just don't know what to say.

Going Back to School: The chances that your classmates will have witnessed or heard about your SCA is quite high. If you are comfortable sharing your story classmates, teachers and others will more than likely be very interested and will want to hear about it. Consider submitting an article to your school newspaper and use it to educate others about the importance of CPR/AED certification. Seek out a trusted teacher, coach or friend(s) and don't be afraid to talk with your health office personnel.

Spouses/Children: This has been a big scare not only for you but for your family as well. Many of us have actually had family members start CPR and call 911. Be patient with them and understand they are just looking out for you. The best advice is TALK, TALK, TALK. If you haven't been doing this before your SCA you must now. Talk about your feelings; good, bad and otherwise.

Parents: If you are a young SCA survivor your parents and siblings have obviously been affected too. Be gentle and have patience with them - as over-protective as they might seem at first, they are concerned and face many of the same feelings you may be going through. Communication is the key. Life will have a 'new-normal' but it will get easier for all of you.

Living with a Medical Device: Many of us have an ICD implanted. Become educated about your device. You may not be prepared for the shock it may give, but that shock could save your life.

Support Group: We strongly suggest you join some kind of support group; preferably ours! It really helped us get through the tough times especially early on just knowing we weren't alone and that we could call someone to talk to who has been there.

Counseling: This isn't for everyone and each person has different needs, but if you are having problems coping we suggest you talk to a professional.

Meeting Rescuers: Many of our survivors have had the chance to meet and thank their rescuers. It has been a powerful experience and we hope that someday you have the chance to do this.

If you have found this brochure helpful and are looking for additional resources, please contact us at:

763-370-5750
mnscasurvivor@yahoo.com
www.mnscasurvivor.org

The MN SCA Survivors hold monthly meetings and a yearly Survivors Summit in the Twin Cities metro area. All survivors and family members are welcome to attend. Contact us for further information.

