

Knowing more about sudden cardiac death ...

Sudden death is the sudden, unexpected and non-accidental death, most often of cardiac origin. In sudden cardiac death there is an abrupt loss of cardiac function and consequently of consciousness and respiratory function. It usually results from an electrical disturbance (eg, a malignant arrhythmia) that disrupts the pumping action of the heart and therefore no blood flow to the body. If not treated immediately, this cardiac arrest leads to death.

With proper and prompt medical treatment, survival is possible. If resuscitation maneuvers are initiated immediately (chest compressions and external defibrillator, if available) until medical help arrives, the likelihood of survival increases because the lack of oxygenated blood in the brain causes irreversible damage. Few resuscitation attempts are successful after 10 minutes, and within three minutes the brain is already starting to suffer damage. Rapid defibrillation and basic life support can thus increase long-term survival rates.

The signs and symptoms of cardiac arrest are sudden and drastic and include: sudden collapse, no pulse, no breathing, and loss of consciousness. They may occur without warning or may be preceded by other symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath or palpitations.

When a person is unconscious, and without pulse and respiratory movements, help should be quick and effective:

1. Call 112 and explain clearly what is going on
2. Immediately start resuscitation maneuvers with chest compressions (in the sternum) with force and speed and always with arms extended.
3. If available nearby ask someone for the automatic external defibrillator and place the paddles on the person following the verbal instructions.
4. Continue to perform resuscitation maneuvers until medical help is received, including while the external defibrillator is charging (moving away at the time of shock from the defibrillator).

Cardiac arrest can occur in people without known heart disease, although it is more common in people with prior heart disease, such as coronary heart disease, previous myocardial infarction, "dilated" heart, heart valve disease, congenital heart disease, electrical problems of the heart (such as Brugada syndrome, long QT syndrome ...). For this reason, it is very important that we are all familiar with this situation.

To reduce the risk of sudden cardiac death you should consult your doctor regularly, screen for heart disease and have a healthy lifestyle.