

# DEFIBRILLATORS ARE CRUCIAL

Jon Carney, facilities manager for ESR, explains why defibrillators are a must for any squash club

**E**vidence and research clearly shows that automatic external defibrillators (AED) can make a difference between life or death in the event of a cardiac arrest.

Clubs should take heed of impressive results that have been reported, with survival rates as high as

but under English law there can be negligence liability for failing to take appropriate safety precautions on your premises.

AEDs are commonplace in most public leisure facilities and educational leisure establishments, but in sports clubs their

availability is less certain. A recent survey of this sector by ESR suggests that 30% of community sports clubs do not currently provide AEDs.

Key barriers as to why AEDs were not provided included cost, lack of funding, lack of knowledge on the benefits and fear over the liability of misuse or maintenance.

However, ESR would urge all clubs to invest in an AED

as soon as possible. Although there is currently no public funding available to buy one, they must be seen as a 'must-have' item considering their potential impact if required.

74% and fast response times often possible when an AED is nearby.

There is currently no legislation in the UK which obliges businesses or premises to provide an AED,



A defibrillator in use

## CARDIAC ARREST v HEART ATTACK

● **A cardiac arrest** happens when your heart stops pumping blood around your body. As a result, you will fall unconscious and won't be breathing normally. Immediate cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation is needed to have any chance of survival.

● **A heart attack** occurs when the supply of blood to the heart is suddenly blocked, usually by a blood

clot. Symptoms can include chest pain; shortness of breath; feeling weak and/or light-headed; an overwhelming feeling of anxiety. Not everyone experiences severe chest pain; often the pain can be mild and mistaken for indigestion. It is the combination of symptoms that is important in determining whether a person is having a heart attack.

## DEFIBRILLATOR FACTFILE

St John Ambulance answers some frequently asked questions about defibrillators:

**Q: What is an AED?**

**A:** An AED is a sophisticated, reliable, safe, computerised device that delivers electric shocks to a casualty in cardiac arrest when the ECG rhythm is one that is likely to respond to a shock. Modern AEDs are suitable for use by both emergency first-aiders and healthcare professionals. All AEDs analyse the casualty's ECG rhythm and determine the need for a shock. The semi-automatic AED indicates the need for a shock, which is delivered by the rescuer, while the fully automatic AED administers the shock without the need for intervention by the rescuer.

**Q: Are AEDs easy to use?**

**A:** Yes. You turn on the device (some turn on automatically when the lid is opened), and there are clear and concise 'voice prompts' advising you exactly what to do every step of the way. Most of our AEDs can be used by an emergency first-aid or layperson with minimum training, although we would recommend either a fully automatic or semi-automatic device in these circumstances.

**Q: Can AEDs be used on children as well as adults?**

**A:** Yes. Standard AED pads are suitable for use on children older than eight. Special infant/child pads that attenuate the current delivered during defibrillation should be used on children aged between one and eight if they are available. However, in an emergency, if an AED with adult pads is the only device available, its use should be considered. The use of an AED is not recommended on children aged less than a year old.

**Q: Has anyone been sued in the UK for using an AED on a casualty who did not recover?**

**A:** As far as we are aware, no one in the UK has been successfully sued for using an AED on a cardiac arrest casualty and failing to revive the casualty.

**Q: Are AEDs dangerous unless used by a medical professional?**

**A:** No. Anyone can safely use an AED. The minutes saved are crucial and this strategy has been responsible for saving many lives. Research shows that for every minute that the first shock is delayed, the chances of the patient's survival diminishes by 10%. The Resuscitation Council (UK) advises that the administration of a defibrillatory shock should not be delayed while waiting for more highly trained personnel to arrive.

## WHERE DO YOU BUY ONE?

ESR has an agreement with St John Ambulance for advice on AEDs and first aid. This also extends to discounted rates for its members on first aid equipment and training. St John AEDs and other first aid equipment can be found at: <http://www.stjohnsupplies.co.uk/>

To receive an ESR discount of up to 15% (dependent on model), contact 0207 239 8140 or [national-sales@sja.org.uk](mailto:national-sales@sja.org.uk) and quote ESR AED. For each AED sold, St John will also give one free place on a training course in how to use one.