

AED: Lessons Learned - A Life Saved During Monday Night Football

It was the first Monday Night Football® game of 2023. We were all glued to the TV. There were 6 minutes to go in the first quarter. The Bengals were up 7-3. Suddenly, what looked like a routine play turned horrific. Buffalo Bills player, Damar Hamlin collapsed and was unresponsive. The medical team responded, and he was revived – **a life was saved**. Hamlin survived because he not only received immediate medical attention, but the right safety equipment was readily available and accessible.

Make sure your community has discussions about sports safety and accessibility to the right life-saving equipment. As in the case of Hamlin, having immediate access to an AED can save a life. Here are some insights that can help in those discussions.

Hamlin suffered sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), meaning his heart stopped beating. Medical staff responded and performed cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and an automated external defibrillator (AED) was used to restore his heartbeat. Without CPR and the use of an AED, he likely would not have survived. Since SCA can happen to anyone almost anywhere—even to someone you know—that is why it is critical to have readily accessible AEDs at local sporting events and recreational activities.

What is SCA?

SCA (sudden cardiac arrest) is when the heart suddenly loses its normal rhythm and stops pumping blood. There is no blood flow to a person's vital organs. That is why Hamlin immediately lost consciousness and collapsed on the field. Although it can be fatal, it is a survivable condition, as in Hamlin's case. People survive because they are treated immediately with a combination of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation by the electrical shock from an AED.

What is CPR?

CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) is emergency lifesaving procedures performed when a person's heart stops beating. It can be administered by one or two people performing chest compressions and rescue breathing, either mouth-to-mouth or with a manual resuscitator. Speedy administration of CPR during cardiac arrest is essential in order to preserve the heart muscle, brain tissue, and the functioning of other essential organs. It is important to remember that CPR does not restart the heart. The chest compressions artificially make the heart pump and push blood from the heart to the vital organs of the body.

What is an AED?

An AED (Automated External Defibrillator) is a portable medical device that analyzes a heart's rhythm and delivers an electrical shock to restart the heart. When sudden cardiac arrest occurs, CPR must be administered until the AED is available. Only an AED can get the heart beating again by administering an electrical shock to "restart" it. Chest compressions and breathing resuscitation cease while the AED is taking readings and the shock is administered. Once the heart restarts, the patient is transported to the hospital for further evaluation and treatment.

For local gyms, skating rinks, dance halls, and schools, AEDs mounted in accessible cabinets are most appropriate. For activities like football, track, and field hockey, a portable AED in a carrying case works best, as it can be carried to games or onto the practice field.

As Life Safety Professionals, many of you are already educating your customers and providing AEDs to them. Now we can also use this information in our communities, allowing us to make informed decisions about safety and the best AED equipment— **to save a life**.

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