

## Defibrillators Needed in Public Places



If your heart stops, minutes make the difference between life and death and if you have a heart attack in a public place, a defibrillator may be your best shot at surviving.

A new study shows they save more lives than CPR alone.

The crowds at Memorial Stadium were getting ready for a big game, Rider against Richland.

The stadium does not have its own defibrillator yet but the Wichita Falls Independent School District is working on getting some. For now an ambulance parks outside and can rush in at a moment's notice.

Some places that draw crowds already have their own.

Events at the Kay Yeager Coliseum get your heart pumping. But if your heart stopped suddenly, a defibrillator inside could shock it back to a normal beat.

The coliseum hopes to get more, Sikes Senter Mall has two. No one's had to use them yet. But the manager feels better knowing they're here. Managers and security know how to use them.

The Wichita County Courthouse has one and two patrol cars take them on the road.

Every Wichita Falls fire unit carries a defibrillator. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute put out a study comparing these to only CPR.

A group trained in automated external defibrillators and CPR had 29 survivors -- compared to 15 who had just CPR.

"If a person is in that erratic, quivering heartbeat, this is all that's gonna get 'em out of it. CPR might sustain life to their brain for a while, but this is what'll get 'em back in that normal rhythm," says Captain Roger Ritchie.

Captain Roger Ritchie says that rhythm is what you want. The faster it returns, the more muscle you can save, and the less brain damage you'll suffer.

Your brain starts to die after only four minutes without oxygen and a cardiac registered nurse at United Regional says out of a million people who have heart attacks every year-- half die before they get to the hospital.

The machines walk you through what to do. You turn it on, and place the electrodes on the patient's chest. It searches for signs and only works if it finds an erratic heartbeat. If it gives the go-ahead, you push a button to give the shock.

Ritchie says fast response makes a huge difference.

"The quicker they get out of the hospital and back to a normal life," says Ritchie.

He thinks having them in public places can help you in a hurry and as technology improves, we may all end up carrying these devices.

Ritchie says first responders use their defibrillators five or six times a week across Wichita Falls, even at doctors' offices when someone's in cardiac arrest.

Archer City schools have one.

The American Heart Association would ultimately like to see a defibrillator everywhere you find a fire extinguisher.

Anyone can learn to use them and the American Heart Association and the American Red Cross offer training.

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