

How to Respond to a Sudden Heart Attack

Workplace safety comes in many forms, including employees' response to an injured coworker. When thinking about workplace injuries, first aid often comes to mind. However, we ought to also consider what to do should a coworker go into sudden cardiac arrest. Statistically, most heart attacks occur at the start of the work week, heavily driven by the return to job stress, physical exertion, and natural, early-morning surges in blood pressure and adrenaline. Further, they are most likely to occur during the first few hours of work, as cortisol and adrenaline levels peak.

Sudden cardiac arrest occurs when the heart abruptly stops beating. This typically causes victims to collapse, become unresponsive, and stop breathing normally or altogether. In the workplace, the following is an appropriate response.

- **Ensure scene safety:** Remove hazards around the victim or halt work in the area.
- **Check for responsiveness:** Is the victim non-responsive and not breathing or gasping for breath?
- **Yell for help:** Tell someone nearby to call 911 or your emergency response number. Ask someone to bring you an AED (automated external defibrillator) if there's one on hand.
- **Check for no breathing or only gasping:** If the person isn't breathing or is only gasping, begin CPR with compressions.
- **Administer CPR:** Push down at least two inches in the center of the chest at a rate of 100 to 120 pushes a minute. Allow the chest to return to its normal position after each push.
- **Use an AED:** As soon as it arrives, turn it on and follow the prompts.
- **Continue CPR:** Administer it until the person starts breathing or moving, or until someone with more advanced training, such as an EMT or paramedic, takes over.

The most important response to a person suffering from a heart attack is to move quickly. Following the points above, train staff in CPR so they are most familiar with the process and jump in quickly to assist. Additionally, install AEDs in strategic locations, make staff aware of their location, and provide training on their use. If you have any questions, contact our Director of Loss Control, Robert Blaisdell, at rblaisdell@wrightinsurance.com.