

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Wayne/Holmes Emergency Coalition**

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**WHAT IS AN AED?**

Perhaps you have read about someone's life being saved by an AED, or maybe you even saw an AED sign and a piece of equipment hanging in a public place. Have you wondered what an AED is?

AED is the abbreviation for an Automated or Automatic External Defibrillator. An AED is a portable electronic machine that once attached to a person can assess and treat potentially life-threatening rhythms of the heart.

Automatic means that the machine will perform its task(s) with minimal assistance. External means the pads that aid the machine in looking for those certain rhythms and providing the electrical charge are placed on the external aspect of the body. The electrical charge or therapy is known as a defibrillation or shock which can be provided by the AED once a specific rhythm is detected. If everything works well, the defibrillation would stop the heart's abnormal rhythm and allow it to restart in a normal pattern.

The simple automatic design of the AED allows for non-medical personnel to be able to use the device. It is best if anyone using an AED has received training on the device. This training may be obtained in most CPR classes.

Timing is vital when using an AED. Research has shown that sudden cardiac arrest is most commonly caused by one of the life-threatening rhythms that an AED can defibrillate and hopefully change. Unfortunately, the longer a cardiac arrest victim goes without chest compressions and an AED, the less likely they are to survive.

Automated External Defibrillators are usually placed in areas where large crowds may gather or there is a potential for the need of an AED. You may find an AED in places like schools, fitness centers, shopping centers or stores, hotels, churches, restaurants, airports and factories, to name a few. It is best for AED's in public places to have some form of sign noting the location of the AED.

Many emergency and public service (police and fire) vehicles carry AED's as they may be the first one to arrive at an incident where sudden cardiac arrest has occurred. Ambulances carry specialized machines that do more than what an AED would do as the professionals in this role are trained to provide other aspects of cardiac care.

AED's may be used on anyone age one year and above who is unresponsive. It is preferable to have only adult pads available in most public places as accidental placement of pediatric pads on an adult would not be of benefit to the adult victim. The AED pads have pictures on them to assist in where to place the pads on a victim. On smaller children, adult pads can not be placed as the pictures show, as they may overlap. In this situation, the pads should be placed one on the front and one on the back of the child, positioning the heart in between the two pads.

Some AED's turn on automatically once the lid is opened. If not, the rescuer should turn the power on before doing anything else. Once the power is on, the rescuer should 1) correctly stick the pads to the victim and 2) plug the cord of the pads in to the machine. If it is possible, good chest compressions should continue throughout the application of the AED. When the device is ready to "read" or analyze the heart's rhythm and if, or when, a shock is needed, the AED will remind the rescuer that no one should be touching the victim. Because the AED keeps things simple, the device will be giving the rescuer voice and written clues throughout its use to assist in using the AED and caring for the victim.

In the United States, Good Samaritan laws provide some form of protection for trained and non-trained rescuers who are using an AED. Good Samaritan laws provide for volunteer responders (those who are not required to do this as part of his/her job) who are assisting and acting in "good faith". If an AED is used correctly, there are minimal problems that may occur.

There are more than 100 AED's placed throughout Wayne County. Please take the opportunity to become aware of AED locations in your routine public places and how to provide CPR and use an AED. Remember that early CPR and AED can save lives.

If you would like to submit questions or make topic suggestions, please go to our website at [www.whec.org](http://www.whec.org).