

General Facts about Sudden Cardiac Arrest

- Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is a leading cause of death in the United States, claiming more than 350,000 lives each year.^{1,2}
- An estimated 382,800 people experience sudden cardiac arrest in the United States each year.ⁱ
- Approximately 92% of those who experience sudden cardiac arrest do not survive.²
- SCA kills more than 1,000 people a day, or one person every 90 seconds^{1,2} — a number greater than the number of deaths each year from breast cancer, lung cancer, stroke or AIDS.
- Cardiovascular disease³ is the leading cause of death in the U.S. and most deaths from it are attributable to SCA, where the heart abruptly and unexpectedly ceases to beat so that no blood can be pumped to the rest of the body.
- The most common cause of SCA is a heart rhythm disorder (arrhythmia) called ventricular fibrillation (VF). VF is an "electrical problem" in the heart. Without immediate emergency help, death follows within minutes of an episode of ventricular fibrillation.
- SCA most often occurs in patients with heart disease, especially those who have congestive heart failure and have had a heart attack.²
- It is estimated that 95 percent of victims who experience SCA die before they reach a hospital or some other source of emergency help.⁷
- As many as 75 percent of people who die of SCA show signs of a previous heart attack. Eighty percent have signs of coronary artery disease.⁴
- SCA is *not* a random event. Although it may occur in outwardly healthy people, most victims *do* have heart disease or other health problems, often without being aware of it.⁵
- SCA is *not* a heart attack, or myocardial infarction (MI), which is when a blockage in a blood vessel interrupts the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart, causing the heart muscle to die. If you think of your heart as a house, SCA would be a problem with the electricity; a heart attack would be a problem with the plumbing.
- African Americans are more likely to die from SCA than Caucasians.⁶

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- 1 Roger VL, Go AS, Lloyd-Jones DM, et al. Heart disease and stroke statistics—2012 update: a report from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2012;125:e2–e220.
 - 2 MMWR Weekly July 29, 2011. Surveillance Summaries Vol. 60/No.8. Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Surveillance – Cardiac Arrest Registry to Enhance Survival (CARES), United States, October 1, 2005 – December 31, 2010.
 - 3 Murphy SL, Xu JQ, Kochanek KD. Deaths: Preliminary data for 2010. *National vital statistics reports; vol 60 no 4*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2012.

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- 4 Cleveland Clinic Heart Hub. Accessed September 26,2012.
<http://my.clevelandclinic.org/heart/disorders/electric/scd.aspx>
 - 5 Fishman GI, Chugh SS, Dimarco JP, et al. Sudden Cardiac Death Prediction and Prevention. Report From a National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and Heart Rhythm Society Workshop. *Circulation*. 2010 Nov 30;122(22):2335-48.
 - 6 Galea S, Blaney S, Nandi A, Silverman R, Vlahov D, Foltin G, Kusick M, Tunik M, Richmond N. Explaining racial disparities in incidence of and survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. *Am J Epidemiol*. 2007; 166:534 –543.
 - 7 Pell JP, Sirel JM, Marsden AK, et al. Presentation, management, and outcome of out-of-hospital cardiopulmonary arrest: comparison by underlying etiology. *Heart*. 2003; 89:839-42.