



Friends of Savernake Hospital and the Community

Community defibrillators – how you could help save a life

An automated external defibrillator (also known as an “AED”) is used in treating a condition known as cardiac arrest. This is where the electrical activity in the heart has gone haywire and needs re-setting. The defibrillator works by delivering an electrical current through the chest which aims to shock the victim’s heart back into a normal rhythm, allowing it to pump blood again.



In 2010 and 2011 the Friends of Savernake Hospital and the Community (the Friends) funded the purchase and installation of 10 community defibrillators in Marlborough and the surrounding villages. They are also committed to their ongoing maintenance.

The community defibrillators are very evident around the Marlborough area with their bright, vandal-resistant yellow boxes.

Community defibrillators can be accessed in an emergency by any member of the public by dialling 999.

The code to release the defibrillator will be given by the ambulance service.

When used within the first 3-5 minutes of a person suffering a sudden cardiac arrest, a defibrillator can dramatically increase the victim’s chance of survival.

What many people may not know is that the machine gives clear spoken instructions – **you do not need training to use one**. Because time is of the essence when someone suffers a cardiac arrest, we have set out **below** a few guidelines on using a defibrillator so that you have the confidence to use one if an emergency arises.

For more information and a video about using defibrillators visit

<http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/first-aid-advice/first-aid-techniques/using-a--defibrillator-aed.aspx>.

What you should do if someone suffers a cardiac arrest

- Make sure it is safe for you to approach the patient.
- Check to see if the patient responds to be talked to or to touch. If no response, call 999 immediately.
- Check the victim's breathing and airway
 - If they are breathing then they have a pulse therefore there is NO NEED for chest compressions (CPR) or a defibrillator
 - If they are not breathing, or you cannot detect any breathing, start CPR
- Get someone else to fetch the nearest community defibrillator. The ambulance service will have told you where the nearest one is and how to gain access. You stay with the patient. DO NOT STOP CPR.
- Turn on the defibrillator and follow the voice and visual prompts. DO NOT STOP CPR.
- Attach the electrode pads to the patient's bare chest. DO NOT STOP CPR.
- ONLY WHEN the defibrillator tells you not to touch the patient, stop CPR and DO NOT TOUCH the patient while the defibrillator is analysing the victim's heart rhythm.
- The defibrillator will only deliver a shock if it is needed and/or is clinically advantageous.
- After a shock, check breathing – if the victim is not breathing start CPR again until medical help arrives or until the defibrillator tells you not to touch the patient. The defibrillator continues to assess the patient every 2 minutes.
- DO NOT SWITCH THE DEFIBRILLATOR OFF OR REMOVE THE ELECTRODES.

When not to use a defibrillator

Modern public access defibrillators are very safe to use. However, always follow the instructions of the ambulance service call handler, and do not take arbitrary action.

Please note:

- **If the patient is breathing**, there is no need for a defibrillator.
- **If the child is under 1 year of age**, this will require special equipment
- **In an area where the victim is lying on water, fluids or metal** – try if possible to move or dry the patient.
- **In an explosive environment** – it is dangerous to use modern defibrillator equipment .

The Friends wish to thank The Community HeartBeat Trust for their assistance in the drafting of these guidelines.

Location of Marlborough's community defibrillators installed by the Friends

- Marlborough Library
- Marlborough Town Hall
- Mace Shop at Portfields
- Costcutter Shop, St Margaret's Mead
- Drove Veterinary Surgery, London Road
- Kennet Pharmacy, George Lane, Marlborough
- Preshute School, Manton
- St John's School, Marlborough
- Mildenhall Village Hall
- White Hart, Burbage

Background to the Friends' community defibrillator grant

The funds were made available for the purchase and installation of these defibrillators thanks to a generous bequest to the Friends from former mayor and mayoress of Marlborough, Ted and Dorice Beauchamp.

There is an ongoing financial commitment involved in maintaining community defibrillators. Recently, for example, the Friends paid £990 for the replacement of 5 defibrillator batteries, and each time a defibrillator is removed from its box the pads need to be replaced, whether or not the defibrillator is actually used. Therefore, the Friends do not make grants for defibrillators unless they receive bequests and donations which specifically state that the money is to be used for the purchase of defibrillators or for heart-related issues. It is vital that all community defibrillators are properly and regularly maintained if they are to be able to save lives, and the Friends thank The Community HeartBeat Trust for ensuring that they are regularly inspected.