

A straightforward guide to using a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD)

Modern technology means that anyone can pick up these lifesaving pieces of kit and use them straight away, with no fear of causing pain or lasting damage to the patient.

Put simply, the defibrillators do all the work for you, and unless the machine detects an abnormal, life-threatening heart rhythm it won't allow an electric shock to be delivered.

If you are faced with an emergency, and you believe someone has gone into cardiac arrest, your quick and positive actions can mean the difference between life and death:

1. **Don't panic.**
2. **First of all, in any emergency situation, you need to make sure you are safe yourself.**
3. **Check around; look for dangers such as exposed wires, still active machinery and anything else that may have caused the original problem.**

There is no point risking your life or endangering others.

4. **Once you are certain the area is safe ~ check to see if the patient is breathing.**

You can do this by putting your ear close to the patient's mouth, listen and feel for breathing; you should also turn your head towards the chest and see if there is movement up and down.

5. **If (s)he is not breathing, or (s)he is making strange gasping sounds, call 999 immediately and tell them your patient is not breathing.**

If there are two of you, get the other person to start cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) straight away. This means pumping hard and fast on the patient's chest, just slightly to their left, and at the same height as their nipples.

*[The British Heart Foundation has produced a memorable advert featuring Vinnie Jones, suggesting that CPR is done to the same beat as **Staying Alive**. Google it 😊]*

6. **If you are on your own, then you need to get the defibrillator opened and pads attached before you start CPR.**

As soon as you lift the lid to the defibrillator, an electronic voice will guide you through the steps.

7. **Firstly ~ you need to remove the pads from inside; they are already attached to the machine, so simply tear open the packet and place them on the patient's chest as shown on the packaging.**

One pad goes on the patient's right side, high up towards the shoulder by the collarbone, and the second on the left side, roughly where you imagine the rib cage to end.

You will need to expose the chest to do this, but don't waste time undoing buttons or worrying about modesty, in a life and death situation ~ you need to act fast ~ so either cut or rip the clothes to gain access (Scissors should be in a separate bag attached to every Defib).

8. **As soon as you have the pads in place, start CPR ~ hard and fast as described above.**

If someone else is doing CPR tell them to continue while you apply the pads.

It's really important that CPR is continuous once it has started.

- The machine will tell you exactly what to do while it is analysing the patient's heart rhythm, and will tell you to stop CPR when necessary.
- The defibrillator will either tell you a shock is advised, or to continue CPR.

9. If a shock is needed the machine will charge itself and be ready

10. **You will be instructed to stand clear, and make sure no one else is touching the patient, before you press the button (manual version) or it will shock for you (auto version).**

11. **As soon as you have given the shock you start CPR again, and the cycle will continue until the ambulance service arrives or the patient recovers.** (If latter, leave pads on & put in recovery position)

If you feel comfortable giving rescue breaths then do, **but if you aren't ~ don't let it stop you doing CPR.**

- Give two breaths to every 30 chest compressions.

Remember, chest compressions are VITAL to keep the blood pressure up & oxygen flowing to the brain!

So I would strongly recommend you do not attempt rescue breaths unless you are really confident.