

# Cardiac Arrest in grassroots sport: a quick guide

Cardiac arrest during sport is rare but life-threatening. Immediate action saves lives.

If anyone collapses suddenly and is unresponsive, treat it as cardiac arrest.

This applies to players, officials, volunteers and spectators.

## 1 Check and act immediately

- Ensure it is safe to approach
- If someone collapses suddenly and is unresponsive, **assume cardiac arrest**  
They may:
  - Not be breathing
  - Have slow or abnormal breathing
  - Gasp or pant
  - Have seizure-like movements

## 2 Call 999

- Call 999 immediately
- Put the phone on speaker
- Say: “**Cardiac arrest**”
- Give:
  - Exact location (e.g. What3Words if available)
  - Details of the situation
- Send someone to get the **AED**

## 3 Start CPR

- Begin chest compressions immediately
- Push hard and fast in the centre of the chest
- Rate: **100–120 compressions per minute**
- Allow the chest to fully recoil

**If trained:** 30 compressions: 2 rescue breaths

**If not trained:** Hands-only CPR is still lifesaving

## 4 Use the AED (defibrillator)

- **As soon as the AED arrives:**
  1. Switch it on
  2. Attach pads to the chest
  3. Follow the voice instructions
- **The AED will:**
  1. Check the heart rhythm
  2. Tell you if a shock is needed

If a shock is delivered

Resume CPR immediately

If no shock advised

Continue CPR

## Continue until help arrives

- Keep performing CPR and using the AED
  - Swap compressors every ~2 minutes if possible
- Continue until:**
- The ambulance arrives, or
  - The person shows signs of recovery

## All sports clubs should:

- Know where the nearest AED is located
- Ensure clear signage and access
- Have an emergency action plan
- Ensure members know how to call 999 and guide an ambulance
- Practice regular emergency drills
- Encourage CPR and AED training

Early action from bystanders  
can save a life.

AEDs should be registered on **The Circuit national defibrillator network**.