

# Community Health Coalition, Inc. (CHC)

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Community Health Coalition, Inc.



Healthy People  
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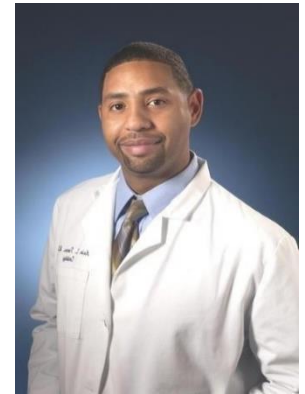
Improving the health of Durham  
& NC communities since 1989

February 2020

## Heart Health Awareness- Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Kevin L. Thomas, MD, F.A.C.C., Associate Professor of Dept. of Medicine, Division of Cardiovascular Disease of Duke University School of Medicine, and CHC Board Member states, “**sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is a major health problem and is deadliest among certain segments of the population – particularly women and African Americans.**”

According to the American Heart Association, sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) kills approximately 350,000 people each year in the United States. SCA kills more Americans than lung cancer, breast cancer and HIV/AIDS combined. An estimated 95 percent of all people who suffer SCA die before reaching the hospital. SCA victims range from young children to the elderly.



Kevin L. Thomas, MD

### **What It Is**

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is a sudden, abrupt loss of heart function. Most sudden cardiac arrest episodes are caused by the rapid and/or chaotic activity of the heart known as ventricular tachycardia (VT) or ventricular fibrillation (VF). SCA occurs instantly or shortly after symptoms appear.

### **Heart Disease**

Underlying heart disease is nearly always found in victims of sudden cardiac arrest. Typically in adults this takes the form of [atherosclerosis](#) (hardening of the arteries due in part to cholesterol deposits). **Therefore, the risk factors for sudden cardiac arrest include similar risk factors for hardening of the arteries; such as smoking, high blood pressure and diabetes.**

### **What Makes Someone ‘At Risk’ to Sudden Cardiac Arrest?**

People with heart disease are at varying risks for dying suddenly, but there are ways to markedly decrease that risk. Anyone with heart disease should discuss the risk of sudden cardiac arrest with their physician and talk about whether a referral to a heart rhythm specialist is appropriate for them. SCA risk factors include:

- Previous heart attack
- Family history of SCA or other heart disease
- Heart failure or decreased pumping function of the heart

### **Cardiac arrest strikes immediately and without warning. Here are the signs:**

- Sudden loss of responsiveness (no response to tapping on shoulders).
- Abnormal breathing (the victim does not take a normal breath when you tilt the head up and check for at least five seconds).

**If these signs of cardiac arrest are present, tell someone to call 911 and get an Automated external defibrillator (AED) (if one is available) and begin CPR immediately.**



### Treatment Options for Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Cardiac arrest is reversible in most victims if it's treated within minutes, but the only effective treatment is the delivery of an electrical shock, either with an automated external defibrillator (AED). The American Heart Association supports implementing a "chain of survival" to rescue people who suffer cardiac arrest in the community. The chain consists of:

- Early access to the emergency medical system. (call 911 immediately)
- Early CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) when needed
- Early defibrillation when indicated
- Early advanced cardiac care

**GET TRAINED in CPR**, refer to the following websites: [www.stopcardiacarrest.org](http://www.stopcardiacarrest.org) ; [www.sca-aware.org](http://www.sca-aware.org)  
GET Trained in CPR; it's easy as **ABC – Compression First (Press hard and fast)**

### FOR MORE HEART HEALTH INFORMATION, CLICK ON LINKS BELOW OR GO TO

- [https://www.canva.com/design/DADx0wHqvgl/6xkblcmJmr0Y0UwmoyUj0w/view?utm\\_content=DADx0wHqvgl&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=publishsharelink](https://www.canva.com/design/DADx0wHqvgl/6xkblcmJmr0Y0UwmoyUj0w/view?utm_content=DADx0wHqvgl&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink)
- <https://www.heart.org> or call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/>

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Thank you.

Health Tip is a message from Community Health Coalition, Inc. and is written in partnership with



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