

Topical Health

Defibrillators - and now there are five

Since the last update in November 2022, and thanks to the generosity of some villagers and village businesses, including Benenden's Community Shop and Cheeseman's Garage, I am pleased to announce Benenden now has five automated external defibrillators (AEDs) which are accessible to the public at all times. I should also mention the hard work from the Benenden Players, who have consistently fundraised for these devices over the last few years.

These AEDs are situated at:

- Wheelwright's House on The Green; this one can be used on adults or children.
- Iden Green Congregational Church porch.
- Cranden Diamonds; in a locked yellow box, but 999 have the code as do many locals.
- Apple Pie Farm Business Park.
- Benenden Hospital at reception.

Defibrillators exist to help restart the heart of someone who has suffered some forms of sudden cardiac arrest; that is when the heart has stopped beating and the person is no longer breathing. It is rarely appropriate to use one for someone who has a terminal illness and was expected to die, because cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) can be very traumatic and in these cases futile.

Some cardiac arrests are of a sort which AEDs cannot help with. Once the AED pads are in position and the AED is switched on, the device will speak to you and determine if its use is advised. Only cardiac arrests in which the heart is fibrillating, twitching rather than beating, due to electrical abnormalities, respond to defibrillation. Again, the AED recognises the various forms of fibrillation and will only deliver a shock if it is appropriate. You cannot harm someone with an AED.

What you can do:

It is never advisable to wait for an ambulance to start CPR and use an AED, as the chances of survival, given the rurality of Benenden, are reduced to almost zero.

- Look out for the AEDs in the village and take good note of where they are situated.
- Do the online training at: www.bhf.org.uk and spend just 15 minutes to learn how to save a life.
- Come to one of the training sessions which are being held at Benenden Hospital. The next one is Tuesday 25 July at 2-4pm in the Quinlan centre. Contact peteralanellis@aol.com or 07860 941139 for more details.

Peter Ellis

A quick guide to using an AED and CPR

To use a defibrillator, follow these simple steps:

- 1 If the casualty is not breathing and appears unconscious, they are probably in cardiac arrest. **Tip:** If you are alone, phone the ambulance first, they will provide instructions and send help. Otherwise get someone to call for you and send someone to get an AED.
- 2 Start CPR.
- 3 Turn the defibrillator on by pressing the green button and follow its instructions.
- 4 Peel off the sticky pads and attach them to the patient's skin, one on each side of the chest, as shown in the picture on the defibrillator. **Tip:** Ensure the person's chest is dry and, if they are hairy, use the razor in the defibrillator pack to quickly shave the areas the pads are attached to. Try to keep doing CPR while this is happening.
- 5 Once the pads have been attached, stop CPR and don't touch the patient. The defibrillator will then check the patient's heart rhythm.
- 6 The defibrillator will decide whether a shock is needed and, if so, it will tell you to press the shock button. A fully automatic defibrillator will shock the patient without you pressing the button. **Tip:** Don't touch the patient, or allow others to, while they are being shocked (the AED will tell you this).
- 7 The defibrillator will tell you when the shock has been delivered and whether you need to continue CPR.
- 8 Continue with CPR until the patient shows signs of life or the defibrillator tells you to stop so it can analyse the heart rhythm again. **Tip:** Start CPR again as soon as the machine says you should.