



# GEORGE RUDIS, CARDIAC ARREST SURVIVOR

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

## Million Hearts in Action

[ Strategies for Achieving Million Hearts Goals ]

George Rudis doesn't remember anything about the moment he slumped to the ground from a cardiac arrest on Oct. 8, 2103. His last memory before collapsing onto the running track was setting his stopwatch for speed work.

"I went to check my watch to make sure it was set, and the next thing I knew, I woke up two days later, looking at my family in the hospital," he said.

Rudis, a long time runner, was 61 at the time and training for his first marathon in several years. He had just finished a warm-up lap with a friend, who immediately ran to his car to grab his cell phone after he saw Rudis crumpled on the ground. Luckily, along the way, his friend ran into another runner on the track who came over and began administering CPR on Rudis until paramedics arrived minutes later.

After being admitted into Memorial Medical Center in Springfield, Illinois, doctors found Rudis's heart in ventricular fibrillation and failing to pump blood, one of his Emergency Room doctors later told him.

His heart stopped at least three times before doctors ultimately inserted two stents, and later a third, to open up his clogged arteries. He also had an "implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) planted inside his chest.

Rudis started a [rehabilitation program](#) almost immediately after his hospital release. "I cannot stand to be idle and I started the cardiac rehab the moment I could," said Rudis, who currently maintains a "level 3" program that involves regular monitoring and an exercise regimen that has him working out nearly every day.

**“I love to talk to people about the importance of CPR and what it meant to me and how it changed my life. I'm always looking for opportunities to make that happen.”**

– George Rudis, cardiac arrest survivor

## [ Fast Facts ]

- Cardiac arrest occurs when the heart malfunctions and unexpectedly stops beating. It is a leading cause of death in the nation.<sup>i</sup>
- Cardiac arrest differs from heart attacks, which are caused by artery blockages that restrict blood flow to the heart.<sup>ii</sup>
- Heart attacks can increase the risk for, and are often the cause of, sudden cardiac arrest.
- CPR can help reverse cardiac arrest in some victims if used within minutes after the occurrence.

<sup>i</sup>AHA fact sheet: "About Cardiac Arrest." Updated August 2016.

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/CardiacArrest/About-Cardiac-Arrest\\_UCM\\_307905\\_Article.jsp#.V-5ss6IYhhA](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/CardiacArrest/About-Cardiac-Arrest_UCM_307905_Article.jsp#.V-5ss6IYhhA)

<sup>ii</sup>AHA fact sheet: "Heart Attack or Cardiac Arrest: How Are They Different?" Updated September 2016.

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartAttack/AboutHeartAttacks/Heart-Attack-or-Sudden-Cardiac-Arrest-How-Are-They-Different\\_UCM\\_440804\\_Article.jsp#.V-5snalYhhA](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartAttack/AboutHeartAttacks/Heart-Attack-or-Sudden-Cardiac-Arrest-How-Are-They-Different_UCM_440804_Article.jsp#.V-5snalYhhA)

## [ What He Did ]

- Shared his story.
  - Rudis survived a cardiac arrest that resulted in him flat-lining several times in the hospital emergency room before he was successfully resuscitated.
  - CPR saved his life, repeatedly. After Rudis collapsed on the running track, a nearby stranger performed CPR until paramedics arrived on the scene. Hospital staff in the Emergency Room also performed CPR continuously until Rudis was finally stabilized.
  - Doctors have told Rudis that being in good physical condition before his cardiac arrest contributed greatly to his ability to survive and quickly recover from it afterward.

## [ What He Accomplished ]

### Got involved.

Rudis participates in his community's annual Heart & Stroke Walk and helps promote other events that raise awareness about heart disease. "Whenever the American Heart Association asks me to do something, I've participated every time and always look forward to more opportunities."

### Participates in cardiac rehabilitation program.

Within two months of his cardiac arrest, Rudis plunged into cardiac rehabilitation, a medically supervised program to help improve his heart health and reduce risk factors. Today, he meets regularly with a cardiac nurse. He also works out five or six times a week, in addition to regular weekly rounds of golf and refereeing high school basketball games.

### Encouraged people to learn CPR.

CPR, especially if performed in the first few minutes of cardiac arrest, can double or even triple a victim's chance of survival. Rudis says he is "absolutely" a walking billboard about the fact that CPR saves lives. He said he seizes the chance to tell people so: "I get the word out whenever I can."

## [ What He Learned ]

### Pay attention to, and take care of, your body.

Prior to his cardiac arrest, Rudis noticed he had begun to feel fatigued and a bit groggy in the afternoons. He also started losing hair at a faster rate. "I thought it was part of the aging process," he said. In hindsight, he realizes both were signs of his body's poor circulation, a result of his blocked arteries. Today, following rehabilitation and with help from a regular fitness regimen, he feels energetic and his hair has grown back.

"I had warning signs, but I didn't even know that I had them," Rudis said, stressing why it's important to be physically active and make healthy lifestyle choices.

"Just take care of yourself and put yourself in the best possible position to succeed. If you exercise and stay in shape, your body will be better prepared for an event that you might not have any control over, and you will have a better chance of survival if that happens."



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