

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST

A Fact Sheet for Parents

FACTS

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is a rare, but tragic event that claims the lives of approximately 7,000 children each year in the United States, according to the American Heart Association. SCA is not a heart attack. It is an abnormality in the heart's electrical system that abruptly stops the heartbeat. SCA affects all students, in all sports or activities, and in all age levels. The majority of activity-related cardiac arrests are due to congenital (inherited) heart defects. However, SCA may also occur after a person experiences an illness which has caused an inflammation to the heart or after a direct blow to the chest.

WARNING SIGNS

Possible warning signs of SCA include:

- Fainting
- Difficulty Breathing
- Chest Discomfort or Pain
- Dizziness
- Abnormal Racing Heart Rate

ASSESSING RISK

Health care providers may use several tests to help detect risk factors for SCA. One such test is an electrocardiogram (ECG). An ECG is a simple, painless test that detects and records the heart's electrical activity. It is used to detect heart problems and monitor a person's heart health. There are no serious risks to a person having an ECG test. ECG's are able to detect a majority of heart conditions more effectively than a physical exam and health history alone.

What are the risks of practicing or playing after experiencing warning symptoms?

There are risks associated with continuing to practice or play after experiencing warning symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest. When the heart stops, so does blood flow to the brain and other vital organs. Death or permanent brain damage follows in just a few minutes. Most people who experience SCA die from it. However, when SCA is witnessed and an onsite automatic defibrillator (AED) is deployed in a timely manner, survival rates approach 50%.

How can I help prevent my child from experiencing SCA?

Daily physical activity, proper nutrition, and adequate sleep are all important aspects of life-long health. Additionally, parents can assist students prevent death from SCA by:

- Ensuring your child knows about any family history of SCA (onset of heart disease in a family member before the age of 50 or a sudden, unexplained death at an early age)
- Ensuring your child has a thorough pre-season screening exam prior to participation in an organized athletic activity
- Asking if your school and the site of competition have automated external defibrillators (AED's) that are close by and properly maintained
- Asking if your child's coach is CPR/AED certified
- Becoming CPR/AED certified yourself
- Ensuring your child is not using any non-prescribed stimulants or performance enhancing drugs
- Being aware that the inappropriate use of prescription medications, energy drinks, or vaping increase risk
- Encouraging your child to be honest and report symptoms of chest discomfort, unusual shortness of breath, racing or irregular heartbeat, or feeling faint

What should I do if I think my child has warning signs that may lead to SCA?

1. *Tell your child's coach or band leader about any previous events or family history*
2. *Keep your child out of play or band*
3. *Seek medical attention right away*

What are the survival steps for sudden cardiac arrest?

- *Immediate activation of EMS*
- *Early CPR with an emphasis on chest compressions*
- *Immediate use of the onsite AED*
- *Integrated post-cardiac arrest care*

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST

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FACTS

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is a rare but tragic event that claims the lives of approximately 7,000 children each year in the United States, according to the American Heart Association. SCA is not a heart attack. It is an abnormality in the heart's electrical system that abruptly stops the heartbeat. SCA affects all students, in all sports or activities, and in all age levels. It may even occur in athletes who are in peak shape. The majority of activity-related cardiac arrests are due to congenital (inherited) heart defects. However, SCA may also occur after a person experiences an illness which has caused an inflammation to the heart or after a direct blow to the chest. Once SCA occurs, there is very little time to save the person. So, identifying those at risk before the arrest occurs is a key factor in prevention.

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ASSESSING RISK

Health care providers may use several tests to help detect risk factors for SCA. One such test is the electrocardiogram (ECG). An ECG is a simple, painless test that detects and records the heart's electrical activity. It is used to detect heart problems and monitor a person's heart health. There are no serious risks to a person having an ECG. ECG's are used as a screening tool to detect abnormalities before a person has symptoms, or as a diagnostic tool to help identify persons who would benefit from interventions to reduce the risk of a heart-related condition.

Developed and Reviewed by the Indiana Department of Education's Sudden Cardiac Arrest Advisory Board (May 2021)

What are the risks of practicing or playing after experiencing warning symptoms?

There are risks associated with continuing to practice or play after experiencing warning symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest. When the heart stops, so does blood flow to the brain and other vital organs. Death or permanent brain damage follows in just a few minutes. Most people who experience SCA die from it. However, when SCA is witnessed and an onsite automated external defibrillator (AED) is deployed in a timely manner, survival rates approach 50%.

How am I able to protect myself from SCA?

Daily physical activity, proper nutrition, and adequate sleep are all important aspects of life-long health. Additionally, you can assist by:

- Knowing if you have a family history of SCA (onset of heart disease in a family member before the age of 50 or a sudden, unexplained death at an early age)
- Telling your health care provider during your pre-season physical about any unusual symptoms of feeling faint, shortness of breath, chest discomfort, dizziness, or racing or irregular heart rate, especially if you feel these symptoms with physical activity
- Taking only prescription drugs that are prescribed to you by your health care provider
- Being aware that the inappropriate use of prescription medications, energy drinks, or vaping can increase your risk
- Being honest and reporting symptoms

What should I do if I notice the warning signs that may lead to SCA?

1. *Tell an adult – your parent, your coach, your athletic trainer, your band leader, or your school nurse*
2. *Get checked out by your health care provider*
3. *Take care of your heart*
4. *Remember that the most dangerous thing you can do is to do nothing*

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SIGNATURE FORM
FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Student's Name (Please Print): _____

Activity Participating In (Current and Potential): _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

IC 20-34-8 requires schools to distribute information sheets to inform and educate students and their parents on the nature and risk of sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) to students, including the risks of continuing to participate in physical activities while experiencing warning signs of SCA. These sheets must also include information about electrocardiogram testing, including the potential risks and benefits of testing.

The law requires that each year, before beginning participation in a physical activity, applicable students and their parents must be given the information sheet, and both must sign and return a form acknowledging receipt of the information to the student's coach or band leader. Applicable students include students participating in:

- An athletic contest or competition between or among schools
- Competitive and noncompetitive cheerleading that is sponsored by or associated with a school
- Marching band.

IC 20-34-8 states that a student who is suspected of experiencing symptoms of SCA shall be removed from the activity and may not return to the activity until the coach or band leader has received verbal permission from a parent for the student to resume participation. Within twenty-four hours, this verbal permission must be replaced by a written statement from the parent.

Parent - please read the SCA Fact Sheet for Parents and ensure that your child has also received and read the SCA Fact Sheet for Students. After reading these fact sheets, please ensure that you and your child sign this form and have your child return this form to his/her coach or band leader.

I, as a student participating in an athletic contest, cheerleading, or marching band, have received and read the SCA Fact Sheet for Students. I understand the warning signs of SCA, including the risks of continuing to participate if I am experiencing any of these warning signs.

(Signature of Student Athlete)

(Date)

I, as the parent of the above-named student, have received and read the SCA Fact Sheet for Parents. I understand the nature and risk of SCA, including the risks of continuing to participate after experiencing warning signs of SCA.

(Signature of Parent or Guardian)

(Date)