

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA): What you need to know!



Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is a life-threatening emergency that occurs when the heart suddenly stops beating. Causes of SCA in athletes is not consistent, but over two-thirds of the time they are due to a heart abnormality. SCA results in death if not treated within minutes. Approximately 2,000 patients under the age 25 die of SCA each year.

Prevention

- Review and practice your facilities emergency action plan (EAP).
- Ensure all athletic trainers, coaches and staff are certified in CPR and automated external defibrillator (AED) use.
- Review all locations and accessibility to AED's.
- Check AED batteries regularly.
- Consider risk factors for participants including family history or heart murmurs.
- **When CPR is administered and an AED shock is delivered within the first 3-5 minutes after SCA, survival rates are as high as 74%**



Signs and Symptoms of Cardiac Arrest in Athletes

MALE ATHLETES	FEMALE ATHLETES
Chest, ear or neck pain	Center chest pain that comes and goes
Severe headache	Lightheadedness
Excessive breathlessness	Shortness of breath with or without discomfort
Vague discomfort	Pressure, squeezing, fullness feeling
Dizziness, palpitations	Nausea, vomiting
Abnormal fatigue	Cold sweat
Indigestion	Pain or discomfort in arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach

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Screening Athletes

- Athletes should undergo cardiovascular screening before athletic participation.
- This screening should include a comprehensive medical history, family history and physical exam.
- An electrocardiogram (ECG) can help identify underlying cardiac conditions that put athletes at greater risk. This is especially important in light of COVID-19 and its effects on athlete's hearts.
- If an athlete tested positive for COVID-19 and had any symptoms it is recommended they receive an ECG before participation.



Return to Play

- Athlete should obtain written clearance from a qualified medical provider, such as a cardiologist.
- School athletic trainer needs to oversee progressive RTP plan.
- Gradually increase activity.
- Continue to monitor the athlete for any recurring signs or symptoms of SCA.



BE PREPARED!

SCA is the #1 cause of death for student-athletes during exercise and sport.

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