

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST

A FACT SHEET FOR

STUDENT-ATHLETES, COACHES & PARENTS/GUARDIANS

What is sudden cardiac arrest? Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is the sudden onset of an abnormal and lethal heart rhythm, causing the heart to stop beating and the individual to collapse. SCA is the leading cause of death in the U.S. afflicting over 350,000 individuals per year outside of a hospital setting.

SCA is also the leading cause of sudden death in young athletes during sports

What causes sudden cardiac arrest? SCA in young athletes is usually caused by a structural or electrical disorder of the heart. Many of these conditions are inherited (genetic) and can develop as an adolescent or young adult. SCA is more likely during exercise or physical activity, placing student-athletes with undiagnosed heart conditions at greater risk. SCA also can occur from a direct blow to the chest by a firm projectile (baseball, softball, lacrosse ball, or hockey puck) or by chest contact from another player (called “commotio cordis”).

While a heart condition may have no warning signs, some young athletes may have symptoms but neglect to tell an adult. If any of the following symptoms are present, a cardiac evaluation by a physician is recommended:

- Fainting or dizziness with exercise
- Chest pain or chest discomfort with exercise
- Excessive fatigue or shortness of breath with exercise
- Palpitations (heart racing for no reason)
- Unexplained seizures
- Family history of sudden cardiac arrest
- Heart abnormalities or early onset heart disease in a family member
- Sudden or unexplained death in a family member younger than the age of 50

How to prevent and treat sudden cardiac arrest? Some heart conditions at risk for SCA can be detected by a thorough heart screening evaluation. However, all schools and teams should be prepared to respond to a cardiac emergency. Young athletes who suffer SCA are collapsed and unresponsive and may appear to have brief seizure-like activity or abnormal breathing (gaspings). SCA can be effectively treated by immediate recognition, prompt CPR, and quick access to a defibrillator (AED). AEDs are safe, portable devices that read and analyze the heart rhythm and provide an electric shock (if necessary) to restore a normal heart rhythm.

Student Name _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____



Cardiac 3-Minute Drill

1. RECOGNIZE

Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Collapsed and unresponsive

Abnormal breathing

Seizure-like activity

2. CALL 9-1-1

Call for help and for an AED

3. CPR

Begin chest compressions

Push hard/ push fast (100 per minute)

4. AED

Use AED as soon as possible

5. CONTINUE CARE

Continue CPR and AED until EMS arrives



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