

Sudden Cardiac Arrest Facts

The Condition

- Almost 400,000 people in the U.S. suffer sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) each year, yet less than 10% survive.
- SCA occurs when the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating.
- At any one time, an estimated 20% of the U.S. population congregates on school grounds, increasing the likelihood of school-based cardiac emergencies.
- In children and adolescents, the causes of SCA are varied and include heart conditions that result from abnormal heart structure or function, primarily electrical abnormalities, and outside factors such as a sudden blow to the chest or drug use.
- Every 3 days a young competitive athlete dies of SCA in the U.S.
- A victim of sudden cardiac arrest will often complain of feeling “faint” or dizzy, usually during or just after exercise. They will rapidly become unconscious and may gasp for breath for a short time.

The Treatments

- Victims of SCA can be brought back to life by providing chest compressions and early defibrillation with an automated external defibrillator (AED).
- Every second counts. When SCA occurs, chest compressions and the use of an AED need to start immediately.
- Survival rates decrease by 10% with each minute of delay.
- There is a 5- to 6-minute window before death or irreparable brain damage occurs.
- The AED can only help and will only deliver a shock if it is needed.
- The AED is very easy to use. Just turn it on and follow the voice prompts.
- Since anyone might witness a collapse, it is important for all staff members, parents, and athletes to have some general awareness of what sudden cardiac arrest looks like and what the action steps are to help:

