

UF HEALTH ORTHOPAEDICS AND SPORTS MEDICINE INSTITUTE

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)

SCA occurs when the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating. There are more than 356,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests annually in the US, nearly 90% of them fatal. 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. 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.
- The AED is very easy to use. Just turn it on and follow the voice prompts.
- **Applying the AED will only help. The AED can't hurt anyone.** Once the pads are in place, it will look for a "shockable" heart rhythm and will only deliver a shock if it is needed.

The emergency action steps to help are:

- 1. Call 911**
- 2. Start chest compressions**
- 3. Get an AED and place the pads on the victim's chest**
- 4. Turn it on and follow the voice prompts**

Symptoms and Risk Factors

Educating children and teenagers about the symptoms and risk factors of sudden cardiac arrest is one way to help prevent it. In more than half of the cases of SCA in children, death is the first sign of a problem. Young people are often unaware of the risk factors and don't tell adults if they experience the symptoms. They may be frightened, embarrassed, or simply unaware that what they are feeling indicates a potentially fatal condition.

Athletes don't want to jeopardize their playing time, so they may also avoid telling their parents or coaches in hopes that the symptoms will 'just go away' on their own. Let student athletes know that if they experience any of the symptoms below, it is crucial to get follow-up care right away with a primary care physician.

The symptoms below indicate that SCA may be about to happen:

- Racing heart, palpitations
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fainting or seizure, especially during or right after exercise
- Fainting repeatedly or with excitement or startle
- Chest pain or discomfort with exercise
- Excessive, unexpected fatigue during or after exercise
- Excessive shortness of breath during exercise



The following factors increase the risk of SCA:

- Family history of known heart abnormalities or sudden death before age 50
- Specific family history of Long QT Syndrome, Brugada Syndrome, Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, or Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Dysplasia (ARVD)
- Family members with unexplained fainting, seizures, drowning or near drowning, or car accidents
- Known structural heart abnormality, repaired or unrepaired
- Use of drugs such as cocaine, inhalants, or “recreational” drugs

How do I schedule an appointment to be evaluated for a sports-related injury?

Please contact us at the sports injury hotline at 352.273.7001 to schedule an appointment with one of our sports medicine specialists.

OSMI and UF Health Sports Medicine Providers

Joshua Altman, MD

Primary Care Sports Medicine

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