

Eric Paredes Save A Life Foundation Teen Cardiac Screenings Q&A

Thousands of kids die annually from an undetected heart condition that put them at risk for Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). San Diego alone loses three to five teens each year. These kids could've been saved with a simple EKG. The EP Save A Life Foundation works to raise awareness about how you can prevent SCA by participating in one of the many free heart screenings they organize throughout the year. Their message is simple: *Screen your teen*—whether it's through the foundation or with your own family doctor.

ABOUT SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST (SCA)

What is Sudden Cardiac Arrest or SCA?

SCA is not a heart attack. It's an abnormality in the heart's electrical system that abruptly stops the heartbeat. It's fatal in 92 percent of cases if not properly treated within minutes.

Who's at risk for SCA?

Among teens Eric's Foundation has screened, about 1 in 100 have an underlying heart condition that puts them at risk. Overall, we lose about 7,000 kids annually to SCA.

How prevalent is SCA?

SCA is the #1 cause of death in the U.S., more than breast cancer, lung cancer, stroke or AIDS. SCA is the #2 cause of death in people under 25, second only to driving accidents. SCA is also the #1 killer of student athletes.

How do you treat SCA?

CPR and AED (automated external defibrillators) treatment performed immediately after SCA can double or triple the chances of survival, but it is usually fatal.

Are athletes at greater risk?

SCA is 60% more likely to occur during exercise, so athletes are more susceptible.

What causes SCA?

SCA is the result of an electrical malfunction most often caused by an arrhythmia (irregular heart rhythm). People with these types of heart conditions often have no symptoms so they don't even know they are at risk.

If there are warning signs, what are they?

In the adolescent age group, unexplained fainting, lightheadedness, chest pain, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, family history of SCA or unexplained sudden death under the age of 50 may suggest that a teenager could be at risk for SCA.

Can you prevent SCA?

A simple EKG (electrocardiogram) can detect many heart abnormalities that unknowingly put kids at risk for SCA, but EKGs are not a part of an annual well-child or pre-participation sports exams.

Why don't we do more EKGs to rule out any heart abnormalities?

The biggest misconception about SCA is that it won't happen to your teen. You have no family history...your child has no symptoms...your doctor has not indicated a screening is needed. But there is a dangerously low awareness of SCA among parents and the medical community.

WHAT IS THE ERIC PAREDES SAVE A LIFE FOUNDATION

How did the foundation start?

Established in 2010, Rhina and Hector Paredes formed the foundation to honor the special life of their 15-year-old son, Eric, who died suddenly due to an undetected heart condition. Their vision was to protect other families from the tragedy of losing a child to a syndrome that could be prevented.

What is the mission of Eric's foundation?

To prevent the tragic loss of teens to SCA. The foundation provides FREE screenings to youth to help identify cardiac anomalies that may lead to SCA, with the ultimate goal of standardizing cardiac screenings among our youth, and equipping our schools with readily accessible automated external defibrillators (AED) with CPR/AED training for students and staff.

Who was Eric?

A healthy sophomore athlete who was looking forward to joining the Steele Canyon High School wrestling team. He was an outgoing, energetic, charming young man who wanted to be a police officer and help make the world a better place. Packing one day for a family vacation, he was found collapsed on the kitchen floor. CPR was too late. Long Q-T Syndrome is suspected.

What are the results of the screenings?

The EP Save A Life Foundation has screened thousands of teens to date in San Diego, finding 1 in 100 at risk. The remedy for heart conditions ranges from medication and monitoring, to corrective surgery to ICD implantation. Check EPSaveALife.org for the latest screening results.



ABOUT THE CARDIAC SCREENING

How many screenings are done annually?

The foundation does about six events in conjunction with local high schools, churches or community centers.

When is the next screening?

Check EPSaveALife.org for the schedule.

Who can come?

Any teen age 12 to 19 can come to any screening if they register online at EPSaveALife.org and a parent completes the screening packet, which the teen brings to the screening.

How do you sign up?

Visit EPSaveALife.org and click Register, then download the parent info packet, complete the health questionnaire plus the consent forms, and bring that packet plus a self-addressed stamped, business envelope to the screening. **No one is screened without the packet.**

What happens at the screening?

A volunteer medical team of cardiologists and health professionals from San Diego hospitals perform the screenings. They start by reviewing the health questionnaire and then teens get an EKG, which may be followed by a limited echocardiogram if indicated. The whole process takes less than 30 minutes.

Does it hurt?

Neither the EKG or echocardiogram hurts—they are noninvasive—**no needles or x-ray exposure**. The EKG reads your heartbeat from electrodes attached to your body. The echo is like an ultrasound, an imaging method that uses sound waves to capture precise images of your heart. Both are completely painless.

How do parents get the results?

The tests are reviewed by the foundation's medical director, Dr. John Rogers, M.D., who is a Scripps cardiologist and president of the local Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association. Results are mailed to parents within a few weeks and they follow up with their family doctor as indicated.

