

Protect Students From Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Did you know that one child suffers sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) nearly every hour each day? In fact, studies show that 1 in 300 youth has an undetected heart condition that puts them at risk. SCA is the leading cause of death on school campuses and the #1 killer of student athletes. Here's how school nurses, health and physical educators, sports staff and administrators can play a critical role in protecting young hearts and empowering the next generation of life savers.



Recognize Warning Signs Fainting is the #1 symptom of a potential heart condition. Others include chest pain or discomfort; dizziness or lightheadedness; racing heart, palpitations or irregular heartbeat (especially at rest); shortness of breath; unusual fatigue and unexplained seizure.



Encourage Kids to Be Their Own Advocate Young people often don't tell adults if they experience symptoms. They may be frightened, embarrassed, unwilling to jeopardize playing time or simply unaware that what they are feeling indicates they may have a heart condition that puts them at risk.



Identify Red Flags While most kids experience these symptoms at some point, chronic or excessive occurrence is not typical. Especially if kids are on a regular exercise program, their body should be getting stronger, not breaking down, so consulting a doctor is recommended.



Give Kids the Facts Youth must understand they are at increased risk of sudden cardiac arrest if using performance enhancing or recreational drugs, high-caffeine supplements (energy drinks) or diet pills, or mixing any of these with alcohol.



Understand Risk Factors Many heart conditions are inherited so it's important to review your family heart history. Tell a doctor if a family member had a heart abnormality (repaired or not); sudden death before age 40; unexplained fainting, seizures, near/drowning or unexplained car accidents.



Use the Tools to Help an SCA Victim Demonstrate the Cardiac Chain of Survival: Call 911. Perform hands-only CPR. Use an onsite AED. Anyone who can follow directions can use an AED—no certification required. AEDs provide audio guidance and will only deploy if needed—you can't hurt the person.



Empower Kids to Engage When parents complete medical history questionnaires, they often do so absent of their child's input. Parents assume they'd know if something was wrong—that's not always true. Teach kids to take part in this assessment and consider the questions thoughtfully.



Drill the Skills Seconds count in a cardiac emergency so have a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan in place. Immediate bystander response saves lives. Conduct a cardiac emergency response drill to test your school's readiness. Regularly practice CPR and know where your onsite AED is.

Use our free posters, cardiac risk assessment, videos and other resources at EPSaveALife.org.



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