Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Information for Parents and Students

What is Sudden Cardiac Arrest? The leading cause of death in young athletes while training or participating in sports, Sudden cardiac arrest is caused by a malfunction in the electrical system of the heart that occurs suddenly and often without warning. The malfunction may be caused by an abnormality in the heart at birth, a virus in the heart, or a hard blow to the chest. Survival depends on quick action, including calling 911, starting CPR, and the use of an AED.

What are the warning signs and risk factors?

- Fainting or seizure during or following exercise
- Racing or fluttering heart palpitations
- Excessive shortness of breath during exercise
- Frequent dizziness/lightheadedness
- Chest pain with exercise
- Excessive fatigue during or after exercise
- Family history of heart abnormalities or sudden death before age 50.

How can I protect my student's Heart?

- Know the warning signs and follow up with your doctor if your student is having any warning signs or risk factors above
- Answer the Pre-Participation History questions dealing with heart health and family heart health (questions 4-13) truthfully, and follow up with your doctor during the athletic physical
- Encourage your child to speak up if they are having any symptoms
- Help fund or find grant programs to get more AED's in your student's school

What can schools do to be prepared for sudden cardiac arrest events?

- Have a well-developed, well-rehearsed emergency action plan
- Ensure that AEDs are readily available, along with people trained on their use
- Practice response drills with school personnel, medical personnel, and EMS
- Ensure that AEDs are functioning with appropriate batteries and pads

Information in this sheet adapted from keeptheirheartinthegame.org, the Eric Paredes Save a Life Foundation, and the American Heart Association.