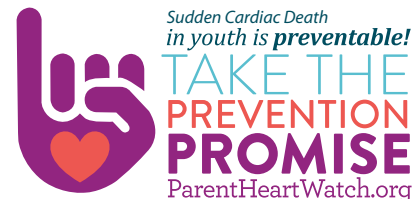


# Protecting Students & Student Athletes from Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Did you know that one child suffers sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) nearly every hour each year?<sup>1</sup> In fact, studies show that 1 in 300 youth have an undetected heart condition that puts them at risk.<sup>2</sup> What's more, SCA is the #1 killer of student athletes.<sup>3</sup>



In spite of these statistics, cardiac risk assessments are not a standard part of well-child checkups or pre-participation physical exams, leaving parents/guardians unaware of potential warning signs and risk factors for a heart condition.

An American Board of Family Medicine study noted that 72% of youth

who had a sudden cardiac arrest were reported by their parents to have had at least one cardiovascular symptom before the event—they just didn't recognize it as life threatening.<sup>4</sup>

Families spend ample resources preparing kids to participate in activities they love, but they often overlook the

need to be sure their hearts are healthy enough to play.

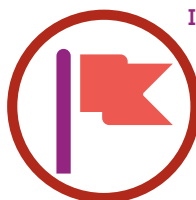
Coaches, physical education and health teachers can play a critical role in educating their school community and their students about how to monitor heart health.



**Recognize Warning Signs** *Fainting is the number one 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 Speak Up** *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 for SCA or death.*



**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.*



**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 50; unexplained fainting, seizures, near/drowning or unexplained car accidents.*



**Champion a CERP at Your School** *Cardiac Emergency Response Plans assure that your community is ready to prevent the leading cause of death on school campuses by being prepared to respond with a well-practiced plan that includes CPR/AED trained staff, properly maintained AEDs and EMS coordination.*



**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.*



**Use Our Free Educational Resources** *In our toolkit you'll find free posters, flyers, fact sheets, graphics, research papers, a cardiac risk assessment, CPR and AED tools, cardiac chain of survival training, videos and more. Visit [parentheartwatch.org/take-promise](http://parentheartwatch.org/take-promise)*



**Parent Heart Watch.**  
THE NATIONAL VOICE  
PROTECTING YOUTH FROM SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST

<sup>1</sup>2015 Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Circulation. 2014;CIR.0000000000000152. <sup>2</sup><https://parentheartwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/1in300YouthAtRisk-Research.png>.

<sup>3</sup>Journal of Athletic Training 2017;52(4):000-000 Harmon et al DOI: 10.1161/CirculatoInAHA.115.015431. <sup>4</sup>J Am Board Fam Med. 2012;25(4):408-415