

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) in Student-Athletes

What Is Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is not a heart attack. It's an abnormality in the heart's electrical system that abruptly stops the heartbeat. It's caused by an undetected congenital or genetic heart condition.

First Symptom May Be Death

Possible Warning Signs: Unexplained fainting, shortness of breath, lightheadedness, chest pain, heart palpitations, family history of SCA or unexplained sudden death under the age of 50.

1 Youth Athlete Dies Every 3 Days in the United States

SCA is 60% more likely to occur during exercise or sports activity, so athletes are at greater risk. SCA is also the leading cause of death on school campuses.

Time Critical

If not properly treated within minutes, SCA is fatal in 92% of cases.

Are there warning signs?

Although SCA happens unexpectedly, some people may have signs or symptoms, such as:

- dizziness
- lightheadedness
- shortness of breath
- difficulty breathing
- racing or fluttering heartbeat (palpitations)
- syncope (fainting)
- fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- weakness
- nausea
- chest pains

These symptoms can be unclear and confusing in athletes. Often, people confuse these warning signs with physical exhaustion. SCA can be prevented if the underlying causes can be diagnosed and treated.