

WHAT IS SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST?

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is when the heart stops beating, suddenly and unexpectedly. When this happens blood stops flowing to the brain and other vital organs. SCA is NOT a heart attack. A heart attack may cause SCA, but they are not the same. A heart attack is caused by a blockage that stops the flow of blood to the heart. SCA is a malfunction in the heart's electrical system, causing the heart to suddenly stop beating.

HOW COMMON IS SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST IN THE U.S.?

There are about 300,000 cardiac arrests outside hospitals each year. About 2,000 patients under 25 die of SCA each year.

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

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

Dizziness	Chest pain
Lightheadedness	Shortness of breathe
Racing or fluttering heart beat (aka palpitations)	Difficulty breathing
Weakness	Nausea
Fatigue	Syncope (fainting)
	Vomiting

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.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF PRACTICING OR PLAYING AFTER EXPERIENCING THESE SYMPTOMS?

There are risks associated with continuing to practice or play after experiencing these symptoms. When the heart stops, so does the blood that flows to the brain and other vital organs. Death or permanent brain damage can occur in just a few minutes. Most people who have SCA die from it.

Act 59 – THE SUDDENT CARDIAC ARREST PREVENTION ACT

This law is intended to keep student-athletes safe while practicing or playing. The requirements of the Act 59 are:

Removal from play/return to play

- Any student-athlete who has signs or symptoms of SCA must be removed from play. The symptoms can happen before, during or after activity. Play includes all athletic activity.
- Before returning to play, the athlete must be evaluated. Clearance to return to play must be in writing. The evaluation must be performed by a licensed physician, certified registered nurse practitioner or cardiologist (heart doctor). The licensed physician or certified registered nurse practitioner may consult any other licensed or certified medical professional.