

## Sudden Cardiac Arrest Fact Sheet

### What is Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is when the heart abruptly and unexpectedly stops beating, resulting in no blood flow to the brain and other vital organs.<sup>1</sup>

### Sudden Cardiac Arrest is NOT a Heart Attack.

A heart attack may cause SCA, but they are not the same. A heart attack, also called myocardial infarction (MI), is caused by a blockage that stops the flow of blood to the heart and causes damage to heart muscle. SCA is a malfunction in the heart's electrical system, causing the heart to suddenly stop beating.<sup>2</sup>

### How common is Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that every year approximately 300,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur in the United States,<sup>3</sup> and about 2,000 patients under 25 years of age die of SCA.<sup>4</sup> In 1999 in Pennsylvania, 154 individuals under the age of 25 died due to SCA.<sup>5</sup>

### Warning Signs and Symptoms of Sudden Cardiac Arrest.

Although SCA happens unexpectedly, some people have symptoms, such as dizziness or lightheadedness, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, racing or fluttering heartbeat (palpitations), fainting (syncope), fatigue, weakness, nausea, vomiting or chest pains.<sup>1,4,6</sup>

### Risks of continuing to play or practice after experiencing one or more symptoms of Sudden Cardiac Arrest.

When the heart stops, oxygenated blood stops flowing to the brain and other vital organs. Death or permanent brain damage can occur in only a few minutes.<sup>6</sup> Most people who have SCA die from it.<sup>1</sup>

1. **National Heart Lung and Blood Institute.** Sudden Cardiac Arrest. *National Heart Lung and Blood Institute*. [Online] April 1, 2011. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/scda/>.
2. **American Heart Association.** About Cardiac Arrest. *American Heart Association*. [Online] May 10, 2012. [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/CardiacArrest/About-Cardiac-Arrest\\_UCM\\_307905\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/CardiacArrest/About-Cardiac-Arrest_UCM_307905_Article.jsp).
3. **Announcement: National sudden cardiac arrest awareness month --- October 2010. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.** 38, October 1, 2010, MMWR: Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Vol. 59, p. 1243.
4. **Policy Statement: Pediatric sudden cardiac arrest. American Academy of Pediatrics.** 4, April 2012, Pediatrics, Vol. 129, pp. e1094-e1102. DOI: 10.1542/peds.2012-0144.
5. **State-Specific Mortality from Sudden Cardiac Death - United States, 1999. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.** 06, February 15, 2002, MMWR, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Vol. 51, pp. 123-6.
6. **Mayo Clinic.** Sudden Cardiac Arrest. *Mayo Clinic*. [Online] November 12, 2010. [Cited: June 27, 2012.] [www.mayoclinic.com/health/sudden-cardiac-arrest](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sudden-cardiac-arrest).