

A Message to Amateur Sports Groups

Sudden Cardiac Death in the Young Athlete

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), when it occurs in the young, is a devastating experience for the family, the community, and society as a whole. There are many possible causes for SCA in a young seemingly healthy child, teen, or young adult:

- inherited cardiac rhythm disorders
- structural cardiac defects
- a blow to the chest wall

Research suggests that over 600 Canadians under the age of 35 die each year from an undiagnosed cardiac rhythm disorder. ***At least 50% of those who died suddenly had symptoms prior to their deaths!***

Because physical activity is a common trigger for many of these deaths, it is important for members of sports communities to recognize possible symptoms.

The Warning Signs

- **Fainting (syncope) or seizure during physical activity.**
- **Fainting (syncope) or seizure resulting from emotional excitement, emotional distress or startle.**
- **Family history of unexpected sudden death during physical activity or during a seizure, or any other unexplained sudden death of an otherwise healthy young person.**

It is imperative that fainting episodes, or near faints (such as dizziness or light-headedness), be reported immediately to parents and treated as a significant “medical problem” until otherwise determined by a physician.

A comprehensive Awareness Strategy should include:

- Learning to recognize ***“The Warning Signs”***.
- Calling 911 for all fainting episodes.
- Considering implementation of a “Return To Play” policy whereby a physician’s approval is required before participation is resumed after an event of fainting.

For more information, please contact The Canadian SADS Foundation: www.sads.ca or email at info@sads.ca .