

Protecting Students' Hearts

Preventing sudden cardiac death



Sudden Cardiac Arrest: at a glance

- Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) occurs when the heart suddenly stops beating, placing the person at risk for death.
- Approximately 350,000 people/year suffer SCA in the community, of which 7,000 are children.
- In children, SCA is most often due to an undiagnosed electrical problem within the heart.
- Survival is greatly improved by recognition of SCA and immediate bystander action, including calling 911, starting CPR and getting the nearest automated external defibrillator (AED).

Student heart screenings

As part of your child's annual health evaluation, there are questions used to screen for heart conditions.

Given how important the medical history and family history is for your child, please come to the doctor's visit ready to discuss your child's history. Use these questions to help guide you:

Your child's history:

- Has your child ever fainted or almost passed out?
- Has your child ever had an episode that his/her doctor(s) thought could be a seizure?
- Has your child complained of their heart beating too fast for no reason?

Your family history:

- Does your family have relatives who died unexpectedly before age 40 (including an unexplained accident, like drowning)?
- Does your family have relatives with heart problems that started before 40 years old?
- Does your family have a history of any of the following heart conditions: cardiomyopathy, Long QT syndrome, Marfan syndrome, sudden infant death (SIDS or crib death), or significant arrhythmias?
- If your doctor is concerned about your child's heart for any reason, they will consider screening tests or sending you to a children's heart specialist (a pediatric cardiologist).

References: Mozaffarian et al., 2015; American Heart Association - www.heart.org; American College of Cardiology

Is your child's school prepared? Preventing sudden cardiac death

If a child experiences an unexpected cardiac emergency in school, it is a life or death situation.

The key elements for a school to be prepared for an emergency are:

- A cardiac emergency response plan for what to do in this type of emergency and how to initiate the plan when it is needed.
- An appropriate number of automatic external defibrillators (AEDs).
- An appropriate number of staff trained to use an AED and perform CPR.
- Practicing drills so that staff are prepared.

Please remember SECONDS and MINUTES count! A person experiencing a cardiac emergency needs action **within minutes**.



More Information about Project ADAM and Heart Safe Schools:

- Please make sure your child's school prepares for emergency situations by being designated a Heart Safe School by Project ADAM.
- If your school is already a Heart Safe School, check with your Project ADAM School Site Coordinator for more information.
- If your school is not a Heart Safe School, contact a Project ADAM team member to get started by visiting childrenswi.org/heartsafe.



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