

# SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST

## What Is Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

**Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is a life-threatening emergency that occurs when the heart suddenly stops beating. It strikes people of all ages who may seem to be healthy, even children and teens. When SCA happens, the person collapses and doesn't respond or breathe normally. They may gasp or shake as if having a seizure. SCA leads to death in minutes if the person does not get help right away. Survival depends on people nearby calling 911, starting CPR<sup>1</sup>, and using an AED<sup>2</sup> (if available) as soon as possible.**

*<sup>1</sup>CPR: Cardiopulmonary resuscitation is when you push hard and fast on the center of the chest to make the heart pump. Compressions may be given with or without rescue breaths.*

*<sup>2</sup>AED: Automated external defibrillator is a device that analyzes the heart and if it detects a problem may deliver a shock to restart the heart's normal rhythm.*

### What are the symptoms/warning signs of Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

1. Fainting/blackouts (especially during exercise)
2. Dizziness
3. Unusual fatigue/weakness
4. Chest pain
5. Shortness of breath
6. Nausea/vomiting
7. Palpitations (heart is beating unusually fast or skipping beats)
8. Family history of sudden cardiac arrest at age < 50

### What are ways to screen for Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

1. The American Heart Association recommends a pre-participation history and physical including 12 important cardiac elements.
2. Additional screening using an electrocardiogram and/or an echocardiogram is readily available to all athletes but is not mandatory.