

A Message to Amateur Sports Groups

Sudden Cardiac Death in the Young Athlete

Sudden cardiac death (SCD), 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 SCD 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 700 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 the sports community 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 (significant 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
- Enforcing a return to play policy that would require a physician’s approval before participation is resumed

For more information, please contact The Canadian SADS Foundation: www.sads.ca or email at info@sads.ca or call 905-826-6303 or toll free at 1-877-525-5995.