

# OKLAHOMA SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION

7300 N. BROADWAY EXTENSION  
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73116  
PHONE: 405-840-1116 FACSIMILE: 405-840-9559



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## SUDDEN CARDIAC AWARENESS INFORMATION SHEET

The information outlined below is to serve as a guide in identifying sudden cardiac events and the importance of establishing an emergency protocol for sudden cardiac events. It is vitally important to act quickly, and appropriately when dealing with any issue dealing with cardiac arrest. All coaches, at all levels, as well as school administrators should be knowledgeable in the school's protocol for dealing with such events.

### **What is sudden cardiac arrest?**

Sudden cardiac arrest is a condition in which the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops functioning. In turn blood stops flowing to the brain and other organs, and can result in death if not treated within minutes.

### **What causes sudden cardiac arrest?**

The heart is a complex muscle that has an electrical system that controls the rate and rhythm at which the heart beats. Problems with that electrical system can cause arrhythmias, which can cause the heart to beat too fast or too slowly. An irregular heartbeat can be problematic, and in those cases the person has generally been made aware of the problem, however it can also go unnoticed, which is what makes a cardiac event so dangerous.

Some conditions may be present at birth, or inherited while others may be an abnormality for an individual at birth but not inherited. Other conditions may not be present at birth, but developed later in life.

### **What are the signs and symptoms?**

- Fainting/dizziness
- Unusual fatigue
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea/vomiting
- Increased heart rate beyond what is normal when exercising

### **What is the treatment?**

Response time is critical when dealing with cardiac arrest.

#### **Call 911 immediately**

Begin CPR and or locate the nearest AED (automated external defibrillator) and begin the procedure for using the device.

### **Can you screen for cardiac abnormalities?**

Yes, the student athlete could undergo an EKG. Below is the 12-step screening process from the American Heart Association.

American Heart Association's 12-step screening process:

*Personal history*

1. Chest pain/discomfort upon exertion
2. Unexplained fainting or near-fainting
3. Excessive and unexplained fatigue associated with exercise
4. Heart murmur
5. High blood pressure

*Family history*

6. One or more relatives who died of heart disease (sudden/unexpected or otherwise) before age 50
7. Close relative under age 50 with disability from heart disease
8. Specific knowledge of certain cardiac conditions in family members: hypertrophic or dilated cardiomyopathy in which the heart cavity or wall becomes enlarged, long QT syndrome which affects the heart's electrical rhythm, Marfan syndrome in which the walls of the heart's major arteries are weakened, or clinically important arrhythmias or heart rhythms.

*Physical examination*

9. Heart murmur
10. Femoral pulses to exclude narrowing of the aorta
11. Physical appearance of Marfan syndrome
12. Brachial artery blood pressure (taken in a sitting position)

**What can I do to avoid cardiac arrest?**

Whether a heart condition is hereditary or not, or even with a healthy heart there are things that can be done to decrease the risks associated with a cardiac event.

A healthy diet, including fruits and vegetables, and avoiding foods high in saturated fat and sodium will help. You should also avoid drinks high in sugar, such as soda and energy drinks. There is no better fluid replacement than water to avoid or combat dehydration.

Energy drinks will increase the heart rate, so you should always avoid drinking anything that promotes an effect of increased energy.

Daily exercise is also recommended to maintain a healthy heart. There is no better way to avoid a cardiac event than to be knowledgeable in your own family history, and live a healthy lifestyle that promotes good heart health.

**Develop an Emergency Plan specifically for cardiac arrest.**

Each school should develop an emergency plan specifically to deal with cardiac events. The plan should include the location of the nearest AED if available, as well as who will be in charge should the plan be put into action. Example: The head coach will immediately begin CPR and ask someone to call 911.

Each school should develop a plan that will work for their respective school environment. While the plans for different schools may vary, no school should be without an emergency plan, which should be posted prominently. All school staff, including teachers, administrators, coaches, etc. should be trained in implementing the emergency plan.

# SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST ACKNOWLEDGMENT SHEET

\_\_\_\_\_  
(NAME OF SCHOOL)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as a student-athlete who participates in  
(PLEASE PRINT STUDENT ATHLETE'S NAME)

\_\_\_\_\_ athletics and I, \_\_\_\_\_  
(NAME OF SCHOOL) (PLEASE PRINT PARENT/LEGAL GURADIAN'S NAME)

as the parent/legal guardian, have read the information material provided to us by \_\_\_\_\_ related cardiac awareness during participation in athletic programs and understand the content and warnings.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT-ATHLETE DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN DATE

**This form should be completed annually prior to the athlete's first practice and/or competition and be kept on file for one year beyond the date of signature in the principal's office or the office designated by the principal.**