

Be Prepared for SCA with CPR

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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It's something no parent or family wants to face – the sudden death of a child. While it is rare, sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is the leading cause of death in young athletes, most often occurring during athletic training or competition.

There are more than 356,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests (OHCA) each year in the U.S., about 7,000 of those are children under the age of 18. Most sudden cardiac deaths are caused by abnormal heart rhythms.

“Sudden death among children and young adults is quite rare, however when it happens, it affects the whole family and the whole community. It is hard to tell who the victim of that is going to be. Frequently these children are normal until the point when it happens, so the best defense that we know of is preparedness for when something were to occur, and the highest chance for survival of one of these events it's early initiation of CPR,” says Jeffrey Orcutt, M.D., pediatric cardiologist, OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois in Peoria.

Dr. Orcutt says there is no full-proof way to screen or determine if a child could be susceptible to sudden cardiac death, so regular check-ups with your child's pediatrician, including a complete family history are important. A family history of unexpected, unexplained sudden death in a young person, or fainting episodes or seizure during exercise need to be documented.

The sad fact is survival of an OHCA to hospital discharge for a child is less than 11% according to the American Heart Association.

That's why Dr. Orcutt says the most important thing for everyone is to be prepared if a SCA occurs, and that means knowing CPR.

“Children as young as middle school age can learn to give effective chest compressions to adults. It's something that takes very little practice and people can reasonably learn how to do high-quality CPR in an afternoon. Several years ago the guidelines were changed so that observer CPR is chest compressions only and no longer is it recommended for laypeople to do mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.”

“We know the CPR saves lives, so that is a huge push for our community in pediatric cardiology is to try and get everyone to learn how to do CPR and be willing to call 9-1-1, push on the chest, and get an AED (Automated External Defibrillator). Those things really do save lives.”

For more information on learning hands-only CPR, contact Elise Albers with [OSF Children's Hospital of Illinois](#) at 309-624-5904.