

## **Soundbite script – Treating the heart of an athlete**

**Dr. Natasha Noel, pediatric cardiologist, OSF HealthCare Cardiovascular Institute**

“We do see that if there is a family history of congenital heart disease, either parent or sibling, the next child could be more at risk for congenital heart defects. And then other conditions, for example, smoking during pregnancy, maternal diabetes or use of other medications during pregnancy can lead to congenital heart defects.” (:24)

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“During periods of intense activity, the body has a physiological response. This can include dehydration, a surge of adrenaline, electrolyte imbalance, and this may not be well tolerated in athletes, who have some underlying electrical or structural abnormality.” (:21)

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“The athlete should go through a pre-participation physical; this would include medical history, physical exam, and the American Heart Association says it’s important to focus on personal and family history. If there is something suspicious in any of these things, the pediatrician can refer to a pediatric cardiologist or they could start the work themselves, which would include ordering an EKG or echocardiogram for an example.” Genetic testing might be necessary, especially if there is a family history. (:31)

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“I want to encourage kids to continue going out and having fun – sports is healthy and it’s exercise,” she emphasizes. “It doesn’t mean that it’s the end of the world if you are diagnosed with something that needs to be treated from a cardiac standpoint.” (:14)