

What is sudden cardiac arrest?



Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is an electrical malfunction that causes the heart to unexpectedly and suddenly stop beating. Because the heart is stopped, blood and oxygen stop flowing to the brain and other vital organs. SCA is NOT a heart attack. A heart attack is caused by a loss of blood flow to part of the heart, usually due to blockage in a coronary artery.

- SCA is the number one killer of student athletes in the United States.¹
- SCA is the leading cause of death on school campuses.²
- Most heart conditions that lead to SCA are detectable and treatable, but often remain undiagnosed.
- An electrocardiogram can detect two-thirds of the heart conditions that can lead to SCA.
- An automated external defibrillator (AED) is a crucial asset in an SCA event. It provides audible and on-screen text instructions to help the volunteer rescuer perform high-quality CPR and administer an electric shock, if needed.



Peyton's Story

Peyton Walker, a graduate of Trinity High School in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, died of sudden cardiac arrest in 2013 at the age of 19. Peyton's goal was to work in healthcare, so her family established The Peyton Walker Foundation. The Foundation advocates for electrocardiogram testing to screen students and athletes for underlying electrical heart issues that can lead to SCA. To date, the Foundation has screened several thousand Pennsylvania students free of charge. Over 130 AEDs have been donated by the Foundation to schools and youth athletic groups throughout central Pennsylvania.

Act 73 – Peyton’s Law

Peyton’s Law is intended to keep student athletes safe by identifying previously undetected, abnormal heart issues that could lead to an SCA event. Signed into Pennsylvania law in July 2020, Peyton’s Law requires the PIAA to notify parents and students on the Preparticipation Physical Examination (PPE) form that they can request an electrocardiogram (at their own expense) for their student athletes.

What is an electrocardiogram?

An electrocardiogram (ECG) is a quick, painless, and noninvasive test that measures and records the heart’s electrical activity. Small electrodes attached to the skin of the chest, arms, and legs capture the heartbeat as it moves through the chambers of the heart. An ECG provides information about the structure, function, rate, and rhythm of the heart, and can detect two-thirds of the heart conditions that lead to SCA.

What does Peyton’s Law mean to you?

- Information about ECGs must now be shared with parents/guardians prior to students’ participation in school athletics.
- Parents and guardians must be notified of the option to request an ECG, at the family’s expense, in addition to the required comprehensive sports physical exam.
- Coaches still need to complete SCA training annually by a provider approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Why is it important to have an AED at school sports practices and events?

- SCA is the leading cause of death on school campuses, so it is essential that an AED is accessible at all practices and games. It’s vital that AEDs are not locked up, located behind gated areas, or placed in inaccessible storage closets.
- SCA leads to death in minutes without a shock from an AED. Survival depends on someone calling 911, starting high-quality CPR compressions, and using an AED as soon as possible.



peytonwalker.org



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¹ Drezner JA, et al. *J Athl Train.* 2007;42:1:143–158.

² Maron BJ, et al. *J Am Coll Cardiol.* 2003 Mar 19;41:974–980.