

Could Your Child be at Risk for Sudden Cardiac Death?

Does your child suffer from fainting spells? Or chest pain and shortness of breath during exercise? Your child or a young person you know may be at risk for sudden cardiac death due to an inherited heart condition (a SADS condition). Many people who suffer from SADS feel healthy and have absolutely no idea that something might be wrong until it's too late. However, a few warning signs and symptoms may cause you to think twice...

Your child should see a doctor if she/he has:

- A family history of unexplained, sudden death in a young person (under age 40)—including drowning suddenly
- Fainting (syncope) or seizure during exercise, excitement, or following a startle
- Consistent or unusual chest pain and/or shortness of breath during exercise

These may be signs of a serious heart condition that must be immediately addressed by a physician.

About 716,000 people in the US are affected by SADS conditions right now—and they may not know it. These conditions include Long QT Syndrome, Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM), Brugada Syndrome, and others. These conditions are hereditary and, therefore, more than one family member will be at risk. It is extremely important that all family members be tested once one family member is diagnosed.

What the SADS Foundation Recommends

1. Every child should have a risk assessment history at regular intervals: preschool, before/during middle school, before/during high school and before participation in organized sports.
The Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndrome (SADS) Foundation offers a simple, comprehensive risk assessment form “Pediatric Sudden Cardiac Death Risk Assessment Form” that you can download from our web site (www.sads.org).
2. Every school should have an emergency plan in place which includes a plan for cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). An automated external defibrillator (AED) in schools is vital. Getting to a person within 3 to 5 minutes is especially important.
3. All high school students should be trained in CPR and AED as a requirement for graduation.
4. Everyone should be aware of the warning signs that may indicate someone is at risk for a sudden cardiac arrest:

The SADS Foundation wants to make sure that each child grows up happy and healthy! Please fill out the risk assessment form for your child (available on our website at www.sads.org or at 1-800-STOP SAD) If he/she answers “yes” to any of the questions, please have your physician check your child’s heart. If you want to know more about getting an AED in your school—or about SADS, please let us know.

