



THE CRITICAL ROLE OF EKG'S IN HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS PHYSICALS

Heart Health for Active Kids

Sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in young athletes. While rare, it's often preventable. An **electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG)** is a quick and painless test that can detect hidden heart conditions before a child takes the field or court.

What's an EKG?

An **EKG is a simple, non-invasive test** that records electrical activity of the heart. It can help identify:

- Irregular heart rhythms
- Heart muscle thickening
- Abnormal electrical pathways

While it can't detect every heart problem, it **adds an important layer of protection** beyond standard sports physicals.

Why Heart Screenings Matter for Kids and Teens

Most sports physicals rely on a questionnaire and brief physical exam. These alone **detect about one in five serious heart conditions.** Adding an EKG can increase detection to **nearly nine in 10.**

Even healthy kids with no family history can be at risk. **Some heart problems only appear when the heart is under stress,** which happens often during intense sports.

Warning Signs Parents Shouldn't Ignore

Many kids show no symptoms before a cardiac event, but **these signs may indicate a hidden heart issue:**

- Chest pain, fainting, and fast or fluttering heartbeat during strenuous activity
- Family history of sudden death before age 50
- Physical traits like long limbs, sunken chest, or extreme flexibility

If you've noticed any of these, talk to your child's doctor.





Visit [ParentalGuidance.org](https://www.ParentalGuidance.org) to find past recordings and other helpful resources.

What to Do If Your Child Is Flagged

A flagged EKG doesn't always mean something is wrong, but until further evaluation:

- Pause sports participation.
- Contact your child's pediatrician.
- Ask for a referral to a cardiology team.
- Get additional testing including echocardiograms or exercise stress tests.

It's always better to follow up than to assume everything is fine.

Take Action: How to Protect Your Child's Heart

- **Ask your child's doctor about an EKG screening**, especially before sports seasons.
- **Don't wait** for symptoms to appear.
- **Share this information** with other parents, coaches, and school staff.
- **Repeat screenings may be needed** as your child grows and competes.

An EKG isn't a guarantee but it's a smart, low-risk step that could save a life.



UHealth Jackson
Children's Care