

Heart checks urged for athletes

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Italian researchers say making young athletes undergo mandatory heart checkups may establish their risk for sudden cardiac death.

The findings by the research team at the University of Padua, which are reported in The Journal of the American Medical Association, refers to young athletes who may appear to be normal but in rare cases are vulnerable to sudden cardiac death due to heart abnormalities.

An accompanying editorial in the journal said what type of heart screening young athletes need is debatable, reports WebMD.

In Italy's Veneto region, routine electrocardiograms were made mandatory in 1982 for all would-be athletes aged 12-35.

The Italian researchers led by Dr. Domenico Corrado checked data on sudden cardiac deaths in athletes aged 12-35 in Veneto from 1979 to 2004.

The study said after the ECG became mandatory, sudden cardiac death among young Veneto athletes dropped 89 percent.

The researchers found no such drop in sudden cardiac deaths among unscreened, non-athletic Veneto youths, the report said.

But the report said the Italian study didn't show whether heart checkups without ECGs would also have prevented sudden cardiac death.

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