UK NSC Sudden Cardiac Death recommendation

Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend universal screening to reduce Sudden Cardiac Death in people aged 12 to 39.

Although there are a number of causes for Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD), hypertrophic cardiomyopathy is the most common. The chances of sudden heart attacks in apparently physically fit young people are very small however they can be fatal.

SCD usually occurs when a healthy young person’s heart suddenly stops beating, with little or no warning, after a period of physical activity.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

- Currently there are a number of uncertainties over the test, the conditions that can cause SCD, and the overall benefit of identifying those at risk when weighed against the potential harms.

- There is very little research into the reliability of the tests for identifying those at risk of SCD, therefore the UK NSC cannot recommend its use in a screening programme.

- There is no agreed treatment or care pathway for supporting those who have been identified as at risk of SCD. Someone who is identified as having a high risk of SCD may become anxious about their physical activity and stop regularly exercising which can be detrimental to their overall health.

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC’s Sudden Cardiac Death recommendation, please visit www.screening.nhs.uk/suddencardiacdeath

Find out more about the UK National Screening Committee at www.screening.nhs.uk. The UK NSC evidence review process is described at www.screening.nhs.uk/policyreview and a list of all UK NSC recommendations can be found at www.screening.nhs.uk/recommendations

The UK NSC is supported by Public Health England (www.gov.uk/phe).