



Sports Shorts

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS AND ATHLETES

Pre-Participation Evaluation (PPE)

The sports pre-participation evaluation (PPE) has evolved over the years to promote the health and safety of athletes at multiple levels. It consists of a history and a physical exam to screen for life-threatening conditions, particularly causes of Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD), as well as injuries or illnesses that may affect an athlete's health and performance.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE PPE?

- Screen for conditions that may be life-threatening or disabling
- Screen for conditions that may predispose to injury or illness
- Determine good health
- Provide an opportunity to discuss health-related issues

WHEN SHOULD THE PPE BE PERFORMED?

- Within the past year, prior to the season's first practice. The exam is valid for one year.
- The best time to get a PPE is at least 6 weeks prior to the start of the athletic season to address any issues that may come up in the evaluation.

WHERE CAN IT BE PERFORMED?

- It can be performed at your doctor's office, some urgent care centers, or in a group screening at your school.
- Your primary doctor usually has access to your previous medical history and may be able to spend more time with you discussing health issues that are important to you. Typically an appointment is required, and the usual fees for seeing your doctor will apply.
- A group screening is typically less expensive, does not require an appointment, and may include specialists in the screening process. The disadvantages are less privacy, less opportunity to discuss relevant health issues, and if additional testing or treatment is required, may require an additional visit to your doctor to coordinate care.

WHO CAN PERFORM THE PPE?

Any MD, DO, NP, or PA who is licensed to practice medicine and is comfortable with performing a PPE.

THE PHYSICAL EXAM

The examination part of the PPE will include things that you would experience during a typical well-child check. A blood pressure measurement, weight, heart rate, and vision screen should also be performed. The medical provider will examine your muscles, joints, and bones, focusing on areas that have been injured in the past or that will get more use, depending on the sport that will be played.

ADDITIONAL TESTING

No lab tests are routinely recommended, but your doctor may order some if needed. Tests for the heart, such as an electrocardiogram or echocardiogram, are usually only ordered if indicated based on the athlete's symptoms, personal history, or parts of the family history concerning heart problems.

This information is available on the Ohio AAP website www.ohioaap.org

THE HISTORY SECTION

Most PPE forms include a long list of questions that are designed to identify previous health problems or potential health problems. There will also be questions about health problems in family members since some diseases run in families. Many of the questions focus on the heart and symptoms experienced during exercise that may suggest an underlying heart problem. Other questions will ask about previous head injuries, musculoskeletal injuries, asthma and breathing problems, skin infections, diet and weight issues, and menstrual history for the females.

The history is an important part of the evaluation and should be filled out by the parent prior to arrival for the PPE. Many medical conditions can be identified through the questions so answer them as honestly as possible and give explanations as needed to give the medical provider as much information as you can.

Clearance of Athlete

Once the history and physical exam are completed, the medical provider uses the collected information to advise whether the athlete is "cleared" for sports participation.

- Cleared for all sports without restriction
- Cleared for all sports with recommendations for further evaluation or treatment
- Not cleared (Pending further evaluation; for any sports; for certain sports)

The goal is to exclude as few athletes as possible while still keeping the athlete and others safe. Physical activity is advocated as part of a healthy lifestyle and beneficial to children both physically and psychologically. Each year, less than 2% of athletes are not cleared for sports participation with 3-13% requiring additional evaluation for reasons ranging from heart problems, musculoskeletal injuries that need treatment or rehabilitation, skin infections, concussions, and other medical problems. After additional evaluation or treatment, the athlete may be cleared or advised in what capacity it would be safe for them to participate.

Summary

The sports PPE is recommended or required for most organized sports participation. Make sure the question part of the evaluation is filled out fully in advance to help the medical provider make an informed decision. The goal is to keep the athlete safe, not to exclude the athlete from participation.

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