

Pre-participation Physical Evaluations

Jennifer Valentic, DO- Akron Children's Hospital

Frances Comer, DO- Nationwide Children's Hospital

As a new school year approaches, many parents will be looking to have a sports pre-participation physical evaluation (PPE) completed in preparation for their child's upcoming athletic season. Though many athletes and families view these exams as checklist items, they serve as an important opportunity to ensure that children are safe for their chosen activities. They are also a great time to talk to the doctor about how to keep your child healthy. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends yearly well child checks for everyone 6 to 21 years old to discuss important topics like nutrition, sleep, exercise, development, mental health, and safety. Conveniently, most doctor's offices are able to perform your child's sports PPE during their annual well child check.

Why are PPEs or, "sports physicals" as they are commonly known, important?

The primary goal of PPEs is to identify health conditions that may impact an athlete's participation or predispose the athlete to illness or injury during competition.

Where and when should PPEs be done?

PPEs should be performed by an appropriately trained medical professional - a Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (DO), Physician Assistant (PA), or Nurse Practitioner (NP), preferably in your child's medical home, where they have access to your child's comprehensive medical history, family history, and injury history. If not included in your child's annual well check, a PPE should be performed at least 6 weeks prior to the start of your child's pre-season practice. This allows ample time for any identified evaluation, rehabilitation, or recommendations to be followed up with, while limiting any impact on your child's school or practice participation.

What is your child's doctor looking for?

- Family history of certain heart conditions or problems
- Personal history of symptoms that might suggest a heart problem
- Poorly rehabilitated prior injuries

- Developmental factors or weaknesses that might predispose to future injuries
- Contagious skin conditions
- Nutritional risks
- Menstrual health in females
- Poorly controlled asthma
- Mental health concerns
- Concussion history

How can you prepare for your child's appointment?

When scheduling the appointment, let your doctor's office know of your desire to have your child's PPE included in their well check appointment. In addition, be aware that many schools require that an Ohio High School Athletic Association Pre-Participation Physical Exam Form be completed by your child's medical provider. This form can be printed at www.ohsaa.org or by accessing your high school athletic department's specific URL. The questionnaire portion can be electronically completed, then printed and brought to your child's appointment. It is very important that these forms are completed ahead of time so they can be reviewed and discussed at your child's appointment.

How are PPEs different from an annual well check?

Well Care Visit	Sports Clearance
Discuss personal and family history.	Personal and family history via form
Evaluation of risk factors for substance abuse, driving risks, mental health, reproductive health, and long term health.	Evaluation of risk factors for sports
Head-to-toe examination and review of blood work, if appropriate, heart evaluation, blood pressure, vision and hearing, physical development, and skin evaluation.	Sports-focused physical exam
Confidential discussion of concerns with your trusted medical provider.	
Screenings and guidance for sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, alcohol, drug and alcohol use, emotional well-being, mental health, education, social media use, sleep, and driving.	
Co-pay not charged for preventative visit/topics.	Co-pay charged