

ARE YOU READY TO PLAY? PRE-PARTICIPATION PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

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A pre-participation physical examination should be performed on all student athletes prior to participation in sports activities. There is a wide range of requirements and recommendations among different countries and universities for this. Among FISU Members, the majority do not require examinations. Statistics will be presented. The goals of the examinations should be to:

1. Promote health and safety in training and competition for the student athlete.
2. Screen athletes for injuries, illnesses or factors that increase risk to the student athlete or others.
3. Serve as a baseline for health status of the student athlete.
4. Identify factors which when treated may improve athletes performance.
5. Meet administrative requirements.
6. Provide practical and affordable examinations.

This may be the only contact a student athlete has with medical care. Therefore the examination must be planned to meet our objectives.

The required components of the examination are:

1. Medical history
2. Physical examination
3. Final determination of student athletes eligibility to participate

Other components should include general information and education about:

1. Health
2. Nutrition
3. Medications

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4. Alcohol
5. Sexually transmitted diseases
6. Weight control behaviors
7. Over the counter medications
8. Anti-doping
9. Sexuality

A history form is most important for recordkeeping, past medical history and detecting cardiopulmonary, musculoskeletal and neurological diseases and risk for participation. Examples of approved forms will be presented. This form, if completed by the athlete with the assistance of a parent should detect 75% of problems affecting athletes. An online system has been developed.

The physical examination must include:

1. Vital signs
2. Cardiopulmonary and musculoskeletal evaluations

This examination could be in a private office or if large numbers of student athletes are involved, a mass examination is preferred. A medical doctor should perform most of the examination, but trainers, nurses and secretarial personnel are important. A “best practice” mass examination will be discussed. Screening tests such as blood tests, ECG’s, echocardiograms and pulmonary function tests have not proven to be cost effective, but statistics of effectiveness and benefits for elite athletes will be presented. A complete examination with massive screening can be developed and is used by the presenter, which should prevent sudden death and improve athletic performance. This will be presented.

From a cardiovascular standpoint, ruling out causes of sudden-death in an athlete is important. An echocardiogram is the single most important test and will identify 90% of the causes of sudden-death. This can be performed as a screening test in mass physical exams in less than 3 minutes.

In the end, the examination must declare the athlete:

1. Unlimited participation
2. Participation limited to certain sports
3. Requires further focused evaluation
4. Disqualified for participation

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