

# Sports Medicine Monthly

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## FOCUS ISSUE:

### The Pre-Participation Physical Exam



The Pre-Participation Physical Exam (PPE) has long been associated with athletics at all levels. As long as there has been athletics, there have been physicals in some form of another. Evolving

from simple questionnaires about how do you feel today, to the vision, heart rate, blood pressure, and general medical and orthopedic work-up that most high school athletes undergo today, the PPE base is fairly far reaching. The resulting physical that we are all so familiar with is an effective tool that provides the school's certified athletic trainer, team physician, head coaches, athletic administrators, parents, and athletes, with a short, but in-depth evaluation of the athlete's physical status prior to competition.

Now while most athletes are not necessarily excited by the idea of getting a physical, a properly performed examination of one's health history along with a proper evaluation of any past or current injuries present, provides for a baseline measurement of overall health, an accurate assessment of conditions and/or injuries which may be present, and it serves as a vital step towards encouraging an injury free competition. By evaluating previous and/or currently existing injuries, family related illnesses, and baseline vital (i.e. Heart Rate, Blood Pressure, etc...) information, conditions that could either greatly hamper one's ability to compete (i.e. Type 1 Diabetes) if untreated, or predispose the athlete to subsequent additional injuries (i.e. Muscular imbalances, joint instability, etc...) are identified so that preventative interventions may be put into place prior to competition. In short, completing a pre-participation physical examination is a simple step that is one of the single greatest injury prevention strategies to date, and it serves to assist in a vital function of sports medicine health care; to prevent injuries from occurring.

### The Physical Examination: Evaluating the Examiner

Although it may seem like an irrelevant question, a solid understanding of who is performing the physical is paramount. In as much as you do not want a novice to attempt to rebuild



the transmission in your car, you should also be encouraged to evaluate who you use as your examiner. Contrary to what some may perceive, the effectiveness of the pre-participation physical examination is not just found in getting permission to play; much like the effectiveness of the re-built transmission is not fully seen in simply starting the engine. The effectiveness of the rebuilt transmission is demonstrated more by how well the car performs, and also how long it performs at that level of quality. In the same way, the true measurement of the PPE is not simply found in getting permission to start competition as nearly as much as it is found in receiving such an effective evaluation that the athlete can also perform at a high level of success, and maintain that success long term.

Therefore, the effectiveness lies yes within the validity of the form, but much more so in the credibility of the examiner who signs off on it. With that being said,



medical doctors, physician assistants, and osteopathic physicians to name a few, are all very well qualified and experienced in performing such an evaluation. By utilizing clinicians like these who performs these evaluations on a daily basis, the validity and the reliability of your athlete's PPE is greatly enhanced. So for your next athletic physical your family physician or your

local orthopedic physician would be an excellent start.



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## The Physical Form: Evaluating the Evaluation

Contrary to popular belief, not all athletic physical forms are the same. While there are standards set forth, some authors take the liberty of creating a form that is very general and vague while others create forms that can be quite overbearing. When it comes to evaluating the quality of your form, here are a couple of areas that some forms may not always have or may not always be adequate in.



### Emergency Contact Information:

Multiple contacts for parents/guardians along with multiple avenues of contact are best (i.e. work phone, cell phone, home phone, etc...).

### Immunization Records:

Though present on a general school health form, having immunization records for athletics is also helpful.

### Health History Questionnaire:



While PPE forms look similar in this regard, a majority are not. Furthermore, this is the single most important portion of the form. A detailed health history about the presence of any cardiac and respiratory conditions should always be present, and questions regarding being advised not to compete in athletics, heart murmurs, asthma, inhaler usage and frequency of usage, general and life threatening allergies, a past history of heat related illnesses, concussions, viral infections, prescription medications, and surgeries all work together to ensure for an adequate picture of the athlete's health history.

As variances between forms is a common occurrence, a great place to start would be your state's athletic association's website. Many, if not all, have one template that they recommend, and quite often, require.

## Sports Medicine Monthly: Our Second Year in Review

For the past two years, it has been our privilege an honor to create and disseminate this newsletter free of charge to you. This publication was created to bring useful, straight forward, and easily implemented information directly into the hands of coaches, athletes, administrators, parents, and any other individual who may have a need for such. This is the foundational principle behind this newsletter.

In the past ten issues, we have examined a variety of topics. Ranging from tissue healing and return to play guidelines in sports medicine, to the



person of the Certified Athletic Trainer, and from how the body responds to injury, to the addition of the new concussion law in the state of Oklahoma.



Going forward from here, we continually welcome your thoughts and inputs regarding past issues and your ideas for future issues and topics. If you would like, you may contact the editor with your comments and suggestions at [dhlunow@csosortho.com](mailto:dhlunow@csosortho.com).

Have a great summer,  
and we'll see you again in August.

## A Note to the Reader.....

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