

Back to School Means Back to Sports...and Sports Physicals



Every student who participates in school sports programs is required to have a sports physical exam. Sports physicals offer parents the opportunity to learn about some of the potential health issues their children may face. “The sports physical exam is the perfect time to track the student’s health,” says Andre de Leon, MD, Family Medicine physician at the Center for Family Medicine (located on the second floor of the Eisenhower George and Julia Argyros Health Center in La

Quinta). “Additionally, the sports physical provides a yearly visit for the provider to evaluate the athlete’s health as a whole, which is very important as teens are infrequently seen for routine health maintenance during this time period.”

The purpose of the sports physical is to:

- Identify medical or musculoskeletal conditions that might make participation in a particular sport unsafe
- Assure that any previous injuries have been adequately rehabilitated so that the athlete is not at risk for further injury
- Inquire about any serious illnesses among other family members
- Review illnesses (past and current) such as asthma, diabetes, or epilepsy
- Examine any medications (including over-the-counter medications, herbal supplements, and prescription medications)

Ideally, students should see their primary care physicians, incorporating the elements of the sports physical into their yearly checkup, which could significantly increase the chances of identifying medical problems. Parents and athletes should jointly complete the history portion of any physical exam form prior to arriving at the office to assure accurate responses. History of any previous heat illness should be included. The most likely reason for athletes to be withheld from competition is a musculoskeletal condition, such as unresolved injuries to the knee, ankle, shoulder, back, hip or elbow. It is critically important, however, that the physician also evaluate the cardiovascular system, to rule out conditions that may cause sudden death. A focused cardiovascular examination should include:

- Accurate measurement of blood pressure with comparison to age-specific standards
- Detection of heart murmurs
- Assessment of the upper and lower extremity pulses
- Recognition of Marfan syndrome, a hereditary disorder that affects the body’s connective tissue.
- Review of the cardiovascular history, particularly as it relates to temporary loss of

consciousness and chest pain upon exertion, or a family history of heart disease, heart murmur, or sudden death.

Parents should *never* allow sports physicals to replace their children's yearly exams. School or sports physicals are available at the Center for Family Medicine at Eisenhower Argyros Health Center in La Quinta, Eisenhower Urgent Care locations in Rancho Mirage and Palm Springs, and all Eisenhower Primary Care offices conveniently located throughout the valley. Cost is \$50. Bring the school's physical exam card with the history portion completed prior to the exam.

For your convenience, **Eisenhower Urgent Care** has locations throughout the Coachella Valley. For more information, please call **760-834-3593** or visit emc.org. With offices valley wide, many **Eisenhower Primary Care** locations offer same-day appointments. For more information about services offered and physician information, or to schedule an appointment, please call **760-773-1460** or visit ema.emc.org.

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