

SPORTS PHYSICAL

Sports exams are done on young athletes to screen for health problems that would make sports participation unsafe. Your doctor will check your family's health history, looking for such problems as a history of sudden death. Muscle strength, flexibility, and overall conditioning are assessed. Safety issues and diet are discussed. Your doctor will look for physical problems from previous injuries, make sure immunizations are current, and answer general health questions at this time.

A general physical exam is done to check for medical problems. Your doctor will ask about past injuries and about any physical symptoms related to sports. Tell your doctor about any problems with dizziness, fainting, chest pain, joint pain or swelling, history of loss of consciousness, difficulty breathing or wheezing with exercise. Hearing and vision may be checked. Overall growth and sexual development is checked, and will guide the choice of sports. Certain lab tests may be done.

Diet and nutrition may be discussed. Athletes need good food and a balanced diet. Avoid high fat and high salt foods. Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Before competition, eat plenty of complex carbohydrates. These are foods high in energy, such as pasta, rice, breads, fruits and vegetables. Avoid high fat or high protein foods that are hard to digest. Sudden starvation diets, not drinking fluids, or taking laxatives are not recommended to achieve an ideal weight. This can cause weakness and other serious problems.

Safety is an important issue for sports participation. Your son should have proper equipment to protect from injury. Safety equipment needed will depend on the sport, and may include a helmet (bicycling, skateboarding), knee pads (skating), or other padding. A protective cup is often worn to protect the testicles from injury. Proper shoes are an important piece of equipment for any type of activity. An exercise and conditioning routine should begin before playing on a team. This will help prevent injuries. Wear safety helmets for bicycling and skateboarding.

Contact your doctor if, while participating in any activity, your child experiences chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, or if an injury occurs.