

ST. NICHOLAS HOSPITAL HEALTHSOURCE

Physical Exams for Athletes

Students participating in athletics gain an abundance of positive, healthy life experiences.

Nearly 6.7 million high school students in the United States participate in co-curricular athletic activities. Fortunately, even with this large number of students participating, the number of catastrophic injuries and fatalities is quite small. Unfortunately, however, each year approximately 20 students die in the course of athletic training or games. According to the National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research, most of these deaths result from undiagnosed heart conditions and others from injuries, heat stress.

For this reason, Wisconsin law requires that student athletes get a physical examination every other year, prior to participating in sports. For many students who are otherwise quite healthy, this may be the only time they see a physician during these formative years.

The doctor will perform a thorough health history including blood pressure, heart function, reflexes and bone structure. If he/she detects any abnormalities, the doctor will order other tests. This is an opportunity to make sure inoculations are up-to-date. The physician also discusses other concerns with the student such as substance abuse and reinforces healthy lifestyle choices. For the female athlete, the doctor can also discern any menstrual cycle difficulties and reinforce the importance of maintaining a healthy weight to maintain normal hormonal function.

Most students have no health issues and the doctor clears them to play sports. But for that small minority who may have an underlying condition in which sports could prove devastating, this biannual exam can not only lead to a healthier lifestyle...it can be a lifesaver.



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