

# Where's the best place for your child's sports physical exam?

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(HealthDay)—Student athletes usually need a sports physical. And the best place for that exam is at their primary care doctor's office, according to updated guidelines from leading U.S. medical experts.

"Whenever possible, the sports physical should be performed in the [primary care](#) physician's office, the same place where the child receives immunizations and other [health care](#)," said Dr. David Bernhardt, co-author of the new Preparticipation Physical Evaluation 5th Edition.

"These are the doctors who know your son or daughter best, so we can start conversations about health, diet and [physical activity](#)," he explained in an American Academy of Pediatrics news release.

Six U.S. primary care and sports medicine organizations contributed to the guidelines.

The sports physical determines a student's eligibility to participate in various athletics or attend

sports camps from middle school through college years.

Conducting the physical during a routine visit in the primary care doctor's office has several advantages, the authors said. It improves privacy and offers access to comprehensive medical records, compared with having sports physicals done at a different medical clinic. It also provides time for any necessary discussions and immunizations.

Sports physicals should be performed at least six weeks before the sports season, Bernhardt said.

The updated edition also includes new guidance for evaluating students' mental health and additional information on female and transgender athletes.

Many [sports teams](#), camps and other organized activity groups require parents to submit their child's physical evaluation form, signed by a physician or primary care provider, before the child may participate in the activity.

The physical is typically required between every one to three years, but that varies by state.

The exam requirements outlined in the publication were produced by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Sports Medicine, American Medical Society for Sports Medicine, American Osteopathic Academy of Sports Medicine, and the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine.

The PPE also is endorsed by the National Federation of State High School Associations and the National Athletic Trainers' Association.

"The sports physical can alert us to any red flags if a family is predisposed to a condition or illness," said edition co-author Dr. William Roberts. "For

instance, if a parent or sibling has a history of heart disease or if the child has had prior concussions, the primary care physician would want to know that for future monitoring."

During the [sports](#) physical, a family doctor can cover topics such as bullying, drug and alcohol use, and birth control within a safe, confidential space, the authors noted.

The evaluation now asks for sexual identity at birth and identifying gender. A new chapter in the updated edition offers resources for transgender athletes.

**More information:** The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [kids and sports](#).

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