

PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

Last Reviewed March 2003

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Definition: Physical Examination is a health assessment conducted by a qualified provider (MD, DO, NP, PA) using professionally accepted standards of practice (ex. Bright Futures). The purpose of the physical exam is to assess health, identify health conditions amenable to early intervention and to provide treatment to correct or ameliorate health problems found.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

School administrative units are required by Maine State Statute to conduct vision, hearing and spinal screening of their students (MRSA Title 20-A §6451). A physical examination is not required by statute. A comprehensive school health program, however, includes policies and procedures for student health appraisals. Schools may develop policies that require physical examinations of their students, although these cannot be used to discriminate against students or to limit their entitlement to a public education. When physical examinations are conducted at school, parental/guardian permission must be obtained and parents must be informed of any abnormal findings.

The results of the physical examination should be entered on each student's school health record and necessary information made available to school personnel who have legitimate educational interests. It is recommended that parental permission to release health information to other school personnel be obtained, in order to assure appropriate communication. Teachers, for example, should be made aware of student's vision and hearing difficulties to accommodate for instructional purposes. Physical education teachers should be made aware of any physical limitations for appropriate accommodations. Teachers should be aware of potentially dangerous episodic problems (ex. seizures, bee sting or food allergies) of students for which they are responsible, that might require emergency treatment. (See section on Confidentiality)

Role of the School Nurse:

- 1 Assures that there is a school sport physical policy/procedure in place.
- 2 Assures that all students participating in a school sports activity, have had a current physical examination and are approved by their primary care provider to participate.
- 3 Includes the sports physical as part of the individual student health record.
- 4 Coordinates sports physicals that are conducted at school.

Sports Physicals: The Maine Principal's Association provides guidance on sports pre-season or pre-participation physical exams. "In a given school system it is probably

necessary to examine the athletes every other year between the sixth grade and high school graduation. The complete exam should be done when the athlete enters the competitive sports program, and in most instances this is in the sixth or seventh grade. The history portion of the PPE should be completed by the athlete and signed by his parents. In the off-season, the athlete health history, blood pressure, height and weight should be viewed by the school nurse. If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', then the school nurse can bring it to the attention of a physician and a decision can be made concerning whether the student athlete needs to have another complete physical examination, or not, before proceeding with the upcoming athletic school year. The examination can be done by a medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, nurse practitioner, or a physician's assistant. Athletes who sustained major injuries or have medical illnesses during the interim; i.e., the time that elapses between the two examinations, should be recycled into the physical examination program at the start of the next school year, no matter what grade they attend. " April 1999. (See the Maine Principal's Association Handbook and Directory for Preparticipation Physical Evaluation forms.)

Resources:

Bright futures – <http://www.brightfutures.org>

GAPS – <http://www.AMA-ASSN.org>

Sample Sports Questionnaire

To be completed by athlete and parent Yes No

1. Have you ever had an illness that:
 - required you to stay in the hospital?
 - lasted longer than a week?
 - caused you to miss 3 days of practice or a competition?
 - is related to allergies? (i.e., hay fever, hives, asthma, insect stings)
 - required an operation?
 - is chronic? (i.e., asthma, diabètes, etc.)
2. Have you ever had an injury that:
 - required you to go to an emergency room or see a doctor?
 - required you to stay in the hospital?
 - required x-rays?
 - caused you to miss 3 days of practice or a competition?
 - required an operation?
- 1 Do you take any medication or pills including herbal supplements?
- 2 Have any members of your family under age 50 had a heart attack, heart problem, or died unexpectedly?
- 3 Have you ever:
 - been dizzy or passed out during or after exercise?
 - been unconscious or had a concussion?
- 1 Are you unable to run a half-mile (2 times around the track) without stopping?
- 2 Do you:
 - wear glasses or contacts?
 - wear dental bridges, plates, or braces?
8. Have you ever had a heart murmur, high blood pressure or a heart abnormality?
9. Do you have any allergies to any medicine?
10. Are you missing a kidney?
11. Have you ever used diet pills?
12. For Women
 - At what age did you experience your first menstrual period?
 - In the last year, what is the longest time you have gone between periods? EXPLAIN ANY "YES" ANSWERS

When was your last tetanus booster? I hereby state that, to the best of my knowledge, my answers to the above questions are correct.

Date: _____

Signature of athlete: _____

Signature of parent: _____

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