

## The Importance of Pre-Participation Exam

While many high school athletes may not view a sports physical as a priority, it is a crucial piece of information for individuals who care for a student-athletes while at school. It is also a requirement to participate in athletics during the school year.

One of the primary goals for a sports physical is to ensure the student-athlete is medically fit to participate in athletics. The PPE is important to ensure safety. The South Carolina High School League, which is the governing athletic body for all public schools in the state, has a handbook. In this handbook, they have a section that specifies that the current physical **"is valid from April 1 of the current school year through the following school year"** (Article 7, Section 16, Letter C, Number 3). Therefore, if an athlete's physical occurs prior to April 1, it is not valid for the following school year. Keep this in mind when scheduling a yearly PPE.

A PPE is an extremely important piece of medical information. It provides valuable information to help prevent potential cardiac arrest, sickle cell related issues, and others. When completing the physical, it is imperative to accurately fill out information related to personal and family medical history. A great deal of risk can be determined by a physician from simply identifying potential problems. Student-athletes are very competitive and generally won't admit to problems. This is an important factor to keep in mind. Parents and guardians should be completing these sections of the physical exam form. The physician will review the history with the student-athlete to ensure safe participation and make recommendations for individuals who may have some concerns.

The student-athlete will also have vital signs taken and a physical evaluation will be performed. These on-site evaluations help determine an individual's readiness for sports. Deficiencies in muscles or nerves can at times be identified during this portion of the exam.

PPEs are crucial to minimize risk and ensure safe participation. Take advantage of your healthcare provider and schedule your annual sports physical today.



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