



Special Olympics
Florida

Free Medical Screenings to Give Special Olympics Athletes the Quality of Life They Deserve.



MEDFEST is a program to facilitate the acquisition of standard sports physical examinations for currently enrolled and prospective Special Olympics athletes. Assessments are conducted by volunteer medical practitioners. Research has shown that people with intellectual disabilities often have trouble accessing sports physicals and exams, worldwide. MedFest seeks volunteer physicians and nurses to provide the required physical examinations which consists of vitals (blood pressure, height and weight), cardiology, abdominal, and musculoskeletal checks.



- Focuses on nutrition, prevention of obesity, hydration, skin protection, tobacco avoidance and bone health
- Empowers and motivates athletes to make good lifestyle choices that will improve their long term-health, using interactive educational games, literature
- Health screenings at games include BMI and BMD measurements
- Seeks to find the best ways to convey and reinforce key concepts and information to people with ID, to encourage healthy lifestyle choices
- Pilot community-based programs underway to promote year-round fitness and good nutrition to improve health (viz. obesity, diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis), positive self-image and quality of life.
- Has interacted with 3,000 athletes at games and in the community
- **Greater than 20% of athletes tested at 2003 World Games had low bone densities (BMD)**
- **56% of athletes at 2003 World Games had BMI greater than 24**
- **Most athletes have sub-optimal diets and hydrate with fluids such as soft drinks**



- Screens the teeth, gums, tongue and mouth
- Educates about correct brushing and flossing
- Teaches the importance of diet to oral health
- Fabricates custom mouth-guards for contact events
- Refers to community for necessary dental care
- More than 20,000 athletes screened in 2003 alone
- **Approximately 33% of athletes have untreated tooth decay**
- **Approximately 12% of athletes have oral pain**
- **Approximately 43% of athletes have periodontal (gum) disease**



- Screens hearing acuity
- Creates custom swim plugs
- Makes minor repairs on hearing aids
- Consults on hearing aids, noisy environments
- Recommends medical or audiological evaluations
- More than 10,459 athletes screened since 2000
- **Consistently, 30% of athletes do not pass the screening, indicating potential hearing loss. Of this 30%:**
 - **50% have indication of middle ear problems**
 - **50% have likely sensor neural hearing loss**



- Provides vision screening services for athletes
- Provides refractive testing
- Fabricates eyeglasses as indicated
- Provides sunglasses and protective eyewear
- More than 45,775 athletes screened since 1991
- **66% of athletes have not had a vision exam in three years**
- **37% of athletes screened needed corrective lenses**
- **18% of athletes screened worldwide have an ocular pathology**
- **33% of these athletes have a serious condition**



- Surveys general exercise habits
- Assesses flexibility, functional strength and balance
- New assessment of aerobic fitness in 2005
- Educates in home exercises to improve performance
- Provides simple exercise tools
- Facilitates community referral as needed
- More than 6,000 athletes screened since 1999
- **Gender and age differences noted in all tests**
- **40-60% of athletes have tight hamstrings**
- **Greater than 60% have inadequate calf flexibility for activity**
- **18-60% have weak abdominal muscles**
- **Greater than 50% have poor balance**

INTRODUCTION

Persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) have a 40 percent greater risk of preventable secondary health conditions, such as obesity, poor fitness, nutritional deficits, untreated or poorly treated vision, dental, hearing and podiatric problems. These disparities in healthcare result from lack of access and ability to pay for services, poor knowledge of practitioners, and poorly developed and supported behaviors to promote health.

METHODS

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® was developed in 1996 to begin to address these health disparities. Healthy Athletes is a program designed to help Special Olympics athletes improve their health and fitness, leading to enhanced sports experience and improved well-being. The mission of Healthy Athletes is to improve athletes' ability to train and compete in Special Olympics. Athletes receive a variety of health screenings and services in a series of clinics conducted in a welcoming, fun environment. Healthcare professionals and students are trained to provide the screenings in an effort to educate the professional community about the health needs and abilities of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



- Evaluate the skin, nails, bones and joints of the feet
- Examine the function of the feet and gait
- Examine the shoes and socks of athletes
- Many athletes have severe pronation
- Those with pronation have associated flatfoot deformities.
- Many athletes have onychomycosis, or nail fungus

To become a Clinical Director or Screening Volunteer, please visit www.specialolympicsflorida.org/healthyathletes.

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