

# Fisher-Titus Medical Center

# SPORTS INJURY GUIDELINES

*“The Winning Team for Your Athletic Health Care Needs”*

## Sudden Death in Athletes

One of the most common heart problems in athletes who died from sudden cardiac arrest is a condition called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, which causes the heart muscle to thicken and makes it harder to pump blood.

A study published last year in the Journal of the American Heart Association (AHA) looked at 1,866 U.S. athletes, age 8 to 39, who either died or survived sudden cardiac arrest between 1980 and 2006. Of the athletes who died, 56 percent suffered cardiac arrest: about a third of those deaths were attributed to cardiomyopathy.

Blunt trauma to the chest causing structural damage to the heart was the second leading cause, accounting for 22 percent of the deaths. A chest blow that interrupted the rhythm of the heart caused about 4 percent, and just 2 percent resulted from heat stroke.

Physicians say submitting a complete medical history could help prevent such tragedy. A heart attack or sudden death of a non-elderly relative could indicate a need for a more extensive evaluation.

Incorporating EKGs and ECCs in a sports pre-participation exam is controversial, due to cost, impractical, and can lead to both false positive and negative results. Physicians recommend EKG screenings only for athletes with other risk factors.

*This information is not intended to be, and should not be used as a substitute for appropriate medical care. If you have any doubt, consult a physician immediately.*

## Pre-Participation Exam

The pre-participation physical exam (PPE) is an important step toward safe participation in organized sports.



It is important to understand the purpose of the PPE is not disqualify or exclude an athlete from competition, but to help maintain the

health and safety of the athlete in training and competition.

### The PPE has the following goals:

- Identify medical and orthopedic problems of sufficient severity to place the athlete at risk for injury or illness.
- Identify correctable problems that may impair the athlete's ability to perform.
- Help maintain the health and safety of the athlete.
- Educate athletes and parents concerning sports, exercise, injuries, or other health-related issues.
- Meet legal and insurance requirements.

### Lowering Your Risk

1. Get a physical with a complete family history.
2. Be aware of the warning signs that could indicate a heart problem.
3. Pay attention to the warning signs: extreme shortness of breath, dizziness, heart palpations, and most significantly fainting.