

# Sports physicals and a medical home

The mother was making a list of tasks that her children needed to complete before the start of the school year. There were the usual tasks of summer readings to complete, buying school supplies and getting clothes for her quickly growing teens. In addition, she needed to get sports physicals for all of her teens.

The schools had really emphasized that the physicals needed to be completed before her teens could even practice with the school team. Her school district and a local church were both offering free sports physicals over the next couple of weeks. The mother thought it sure would be nice to get those physicals off of her list.

While it can be tempting for parents to get their adolescent's physicals at school or through a charity, it could put teens at-risk and does not serve their long-term health-care needs. Sports physicals were put into place not to serve as an annoyance that needs to be checked off a to-do list. Rather, these physicals were required to ensure adolescents could safely

participate in a particular sport.

In settings where many teens are given sports physicals in a short period of time, there are various things that can be missed. This is

due to not having an adequate medical history for that particular adolescent. This is why sports physicals should be completed where most teen's medical care occurs, a pediatrician or family doctor's office.

The difference between the two sports physicals settings is like the difference between having a homeroom elementary school teacher versus a

series of substitute teachers. No matter how good the substitute teachers are, they will never have the same background knowledge of each child as the homeroom teacher who has been with them for several months.

In the same way, pediatricians' offices serve adolescents as their medical homes. They have all of their medical records and doctors who have seen many of them their whole life. Beyond signing the sports physical form, the visits give doctor's a chance to connect with adolescents and get updates on

how they are doing. This can lead to the doctor advising teens on proper nutrition, sleep habits, and addressing any behavioral concerns that they or their parents might have.

In addition, teens often still need to receive immunization and/or booster shots. For example, the meningitis booster needs to be given when an adolescent is 16 years old. None of the vaccines are offered at the larger sports physical settings. This means that many parents will still need to take their teens to their doctor.

Fortunately, the summer is a good time to take teens to their doctor. Most practices have plenty of same day appointment available during the summer and parents can get all of their children and adolescents' physicals done at one time. In many cases, it is easier and more convenient to get into their doctor's office, rather than waiting for a particular day when the school or charity are offering the sports physicals.

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