

Committee on Sports Medicine

## Recommendations for Participation in Competitive Sports

The preparticipation physical examination is a frequent reason for adolescent visits to a pediatrician. The most commonly used list of disqualifying conditions, published by the American Medical Association, was last revised in 1976.<sup>1</sup> It has become increasingly obsolete because of changes in both safety equipment and society's attitudes toward the rights of athletes to compete despite a medical condition that may increase the risk of sustaining an injury or aggravating a

preexisting medical condition. Most, if not all, sports are associated with some risk. The physician, the athlete, and the parents must weigh whether the advantages gained by participating in athletics are worth whatever risks are involved.

To assist practitioners in deciding whether athletes should be allowed to participate in particular sports, the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Sports Medicine has compiled a list of recommendations. First, sport events were divided into groups depending on their degree of strenuousness and probability for collision (Figure). These groups of sports were then assessed in light of common medical and surgical conditions to determine whether participation would create a substantial risk of injury (Table).

Certain activities, such as skiing, are not inherently "contact sports." Yet, when competitors

This statement has been approved by the Council on Child and Adolescent Health

The recommendations in this statement do not indicate an exclusive course of treatment or procedure to be followed. Variations, taking into account individual circumstances, may be appropriate.

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Contact/Collision	Limited Contact/Impact	Noncontact		
		Strenuous	Moderately Strenuous	Nonstrenuous
Boxing	Baseball	Aerobic dancing	Badminton	Archery
Field hockey	Basketball	Crew	Curling	Golf
Football	Bicycling	Fencing	Table tennis	Riflery
Ice hockey	Diving	Field		
Lacrosse	Field	Discus		
Martial arts	High jump	Javelin		
Rodeo	Pole vault	Shot put		
Soccer	Gymnastics	Running		
Wrestling	Horseback riding	Swimming		
	Skating	Tennis		
	Ice	Track		
	Roller	Weight lifting		
	Skiing			
	Cross-country			
	Downhill			
	Water			
	Softball			
	Squash, handball			
	Volleyball			

Figure. Classification of sports.

**TABLE.** Recommendations for Participation in Competitive Sports

	Contact/ Collision	Limited Contact/Impact	Noncontact		
			Strenuous	Moderately Strenuous	Nonstrenuous
Atlantoaxial instability * Swimming: no butterfly, breast stroke, or diving starts	No	No	Yes*	Yes	Yes
Acute illnesses * Needs individual assessment, eg, contagiousness to others, risk of worsening illness	*	*	*	*	*
Cardiovascular					
Carditis	No	No	No	No	No
Hypertension					
Mild	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Moderate	*	*	*	*	*
Severe	*	*	*	*	*
Congenital heart disease * Needs individual assessment. <sup>2</sup> † Patients with mild forms can be allowed a full range of physical activities; patients with moderate or severe forms, or who are postoperative, should be evaluated by a cardiologist before athletic participation. <sup>2</sup>	†	†	†	†	†
Eyes					
Absence or loss of function of one eye	*	*	*	*	*
Detached retina * Availability of American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM)-approved eye guards may allow competitor to participate in most sports, but this must be judged on an individual basis. <sup>3,4</sup> † Consult ophthalmologist	†	†	†	†	†
Inguinal hernia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kidney: Absence of one	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Liver: Enlarged	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Musculoskeletal disorders * Needs individual assessment	*	*	*	*	*
Neurologic					
History of serious head or spine trauma, repeated concussions, or craniotomy	*	*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Convulsive disorder					
Well controlled	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Poorly controlled * Needs individual assessment † No swimming or weight lifting ‡ No archery or riflery	No	No	Yes†	Yes	Yes‡
Ovary: Absence of one	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respiratory					
Pulmonary insufficiency	*	*	*	*	Yes
Asthma * May be allowed to compete if oxygenation remains satisfactory during a graded stress test	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sickle cell trait	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Skin: Boils, herpes, impetigo, scabies * No gymnastics with mats, martial arts, wrestling, or contact sports until not contagious	*	*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spleen: Enlarged	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Testicle: Absence or undescended * Certain sports may require protective cup. <sup>3</sup>	Yes*	Yes*	Yes	Yes	Yes

fall and collide with the ground, they are as much at risk as participants in the more traditional collision/contact sports. Hence, we have included such sports in a group called "limited contact/impact."

A list of all medical conditions that would disqualify athletes from participation would be

nearly endless. Therefore, a concise table that can be consulted quickly and easily was thought to be most helpful. These, then, are the committee's recommendations for sports participation, to be referred to when the physician examines a young person with one of the listed conditions. Our recommendations should only be used as a guideline;

the physician's clinical judgment should remain the final arbiter in interpreting these recommendations for a specific patient.

COMMITTEE ON SPORTS MEDICINE, 1986-1988

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**Recommendations for Participation in Competitive Sports**  
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