



Health Promotion

Health Promotion uses interactive educational tools and displays, motivational literature and demonstrations to raise the awareness of Special Olympics athletes about the need to improve and maintain an enhanced level of wellness and self-care. Additionally, Health Promotion interviews athletes to assess their health habits, and conducts health screenings in three key areas: BMI– body mass index based on height and weight, BP – blood pressure, and BMD – bone mineral density. Health Promotion is by design fun, interactive, positive and engaging. In this environment, we help athletes learn how small changes in their behavior can help them improve and maintain good health and sports performance.

Importance and Impact

At Health Promotion events we learned that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes have limited knowledge of proper health practices and many suffer from potentially serious health issues. Below is a snapshot of our data from Healthy Athlete Screenings performed globally between 2007-2016:

- **59%** of Special Olympics adult athletes are overweight or obese.
- **31%** of Special Olympics youth (less than 20 years of age) athletes are overweight or obese.
- **25%** of Special Olympics adult athletes have low bone density and increased risk for bone fracture
- **20%** of Special Olympics athletes had blood pressure scores indicative of hypertension.

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Purpose of the Screening:

The mission of Special Olympics Health Promotion is to improve the quality of life and long-term health of Special Olympics athletes and people with intellectual disability (ID) through healthy behaviors, screenings and medical referrals when appropriate.

Objectives of Health Promotion are to:

- Encourage and enhance healthy behaviors, such as eating fruits and vegetables, handwashing and sun safety;
- Reduce risky behaviors, such as smoking and poor nutrition;
- Improve self-efficacy and self-advocacy;
- Deliver screening services, and
- Increase the investment of health promotion leaders for people with intellectual disabilities.

