



Health Promotion conducts health screenings in four key areas: body mass index based on height and weight, waist-to-height ratio, blood pressure, and bone mineral density. Using interactive educational tools, demonstrations and displays trained volunteers to work with athletes to raise awareness and enhance skills to improve and maintain wellness and self-care. In this environment, athletes learn how small changes in behavior can help them improve and maintain good health and sports performance.

For health promotion and disease prevention strategies to succeed, policies, systems, and environments must support health. Health Promotion's efforts include influencing and supporting practices throughout Special Olympics, so the healthy choice is the easy choice for food and beverages at local, regional, and global events.

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 in the U.S. in 2018:

- **76%** of Special Olympics adult athletes are overweight or obese.
- **50%** of Special Olympics youth (less than 20 years of age) athletes are overweight or obese.
- **26%** of Special Olympics adult athletes have low bone density and increased risk for bone fracture

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Purpose and Goals:

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 disabilities (ID) through healthy behaviors, screenings, and medical referrals when appropriate.

Objectives of Health Promotion are to:

- Deliver screening services and referrals.
- Encourage and enhance healthy behaviors of athletes by eating a healthy diet, effective handwashing, tobacco avoidance, enhancing fitness, and safe sun exposure.
- Reduce risky behaviors, such as tobacco use and poor nutrition.
- Improve self-efficacy and self-advocacy.
- Increase the investment by public health agencies and officials, as well as private health care providers in service to people with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities

