



Healthy Athletes Program at the Special Olympics World Winter Games 2017 in Austria

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Special Olympics



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Abstract

Special Olympics is the world largest public sport and health organization dedicated to children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Special Olympics Europe Eurasia is operating in all 28 EU member states reaching over 300.000 athletes with IDD. People with IDD are one of the most underserved population. Especially in relation to quality health care and prevention people with IDD face a 40% greater risk of secondary preventable health issues such as poor fitness, obesity, poor oral health as well as undetected hearing and vision problems.

The WHO World report on disabilities suggests that "people with disabilities experience health disparities and greater unmet needs in comparison to the general population. All countries need to work towards removing barriers and making existing health care systems more inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities". Special Olympics is addressing these disparities by providing year round training and competition in 30 plus Olympic type sports as well as comprehensive health and well-being initiatives adapted to the needs of people with IDD.

With its health program Healthy Athletes Special Olympics has become the world's largest public health organization for people with intellectual disabilities. The goal is to bring better fitness, healthy nutrition and healthier lifestyles to everyone involved in Special Olympics - from athletes and their families, to coaches and volunteers. The Healthy Athletes initiative provides a wide range of free health exams, education and care as well as training opportunities for health care professionals and students through hands on experience with the athletes at screening events. Healthy Athletes collect data on health issues of people with IDD that supports policy change towards inclusive, adapted and quality health care and prevention for all people with IDD.





Healthy Athletes provides exams and education for SO athletes in seven health disciplines:



Special Olympics Fit Feet offers podiatric screenings to evaluate ankles, feet, lower extremity biomechanics, and proper shoe and sock gear to participating athletes. Fit Feet helps Special Olympics athletes step lively on the playing field, and in everyday life. Many athletes suffer from foot and ankle pain, or deformities that impair their performance. In fact, up to 50 percent of Special Olympics athletes experience one or more preventable or treatable foot conditions that can affect their sports participation. Often, these individuals are not fitted with the best shoes and socks for their particular sport. During Fit Feet events, volunteer podiatrists work with athletes to evaluate problems of the feet, ankles and lower extremity biomechanics.



FUNfitness is the physical therapy discipline of Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® that addresses the ongoing health needs of Special Olympics (SO) athletes. FUNfitness provides athletes the opportunity to be screened for flexibility of hamstring, calf, shoulder rotator and hip flexor muscles; functional strength of the abdominal and lower extremity muscles; and balance. During these screenings physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and physical therapist or physical therapist assistant students work with athletes and coaches to improve optimal function in sports training and competition, prevention of or reduced risk for injury and recommending exercises and other helpful strategies.



Health Promotion, a discipline of Special Olympics Healthy Athletes, focuses on healthy living, healthy lifestyle choices, and nation-specific health issues. In addition to health education activities, health Promotion offers screenings for bone density, blood pressure, and body mass index (BMI). Its goals include encouraging and enhancing healthy behaviors and improving self-efficacy and self-advocacy.



The Healthy Hearing discipline of Healthy Athletes provides comprehensive hearing examinations and follow-up recommendations information. The main goal of this program is to inform athletes, parents, coaches or caregivers about the detection of possible ear and hearing problems, recommend follow-up as needed, and advise about the necessity of regular ear and hearing screening.





The Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes program is a vision and eye health screening in partnership with the Lions Clubs International Foundation. It provides comprehensive vision screenings inclusive refraction, external and internal eye exams as well as color and stereo vision tests. Led by volunteer vision care professionals, Opening Eyes is able to offer prescription eyewear, sunglasses, and sports goggles on the spot to Special Olympics athletes.



The Special Smiles discipline of Healthy Athletes provides comprehensive oral health care information, including offering free dental screenings and instructions on correct brushing and flossing techniques to participating Special Olympics athletes.

This resource page is equipped with manuals and forms, event resources and Special Smiles stories and additional information. Special Smiles has demonstrated remarkable success in creating awareness and improving access to dental care for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

PILOT program:
Strong Minds

The Special Olympics Strong Minds program helps Special Olympics athletes strengthen their coping skills. Competition provides a natural opportunity to develop positive and active strategies for maintaining emotional wellness under stress, such as: thinking positive thoughts, releasing stress and connecting with others.

Healthy Athletes' influence is evident with more than 136,000 healthcare professionals trained, free health examinations provided to more than 1.6 million athletes, and 100,000 free pairs of eyeglasses given to athletes. Healthy Athletes continues to grow each year with help from a global network of volunteers, in-kind donations and other financial support. Healthy Athletes is part of Special Olympics' global health program



The Healthy Athletes Program at the Special Olympics World Games Austria 2017 – co-funded by the European Union

1. The Healthy Athletes Train the Trainer session March 17-22, 2017 in Graz, Austria.

Special Olympics invited health care professionals from around the world to participate at the Healthy Athletes Train the Trainer program. The goal was to train health care professionals in all seven disciplines so that they became the lead Clinical Director in their Special Olympics programs in their home countries.

The trainees received a one day didactic training workshop where they learned the importance and impact of Special Olympics and Healthy Athletes as well as how to organize Healthy Athletes events including all logistical and medical aspects. Furthermore the health care professionals had the opportunity to receive hands on experience while volunteering at the actual screening event having direct interaction with athletes and learning screening technics adapted to people with IDD. The goal of the Train the trainer session is to i) train health care professionals to implement Healthy Athletes in new countries or to expand Healthy Athletes in SO Programs, ii) to raise awareness about health disparities and needs of people with IDD and iii) to encourage health care professionals to become advocates for improved health care for people with IDD.

In total 42 new Clinical Directors were trained at the event including 18 new Clinical Directors from EU countries.





2. The screening event March 19-25 in Graz, Austria

The 7 screening venues were set up in the Stadhalle/Messe Graz and provided a warm and friendly area for athletes coming through Healthy Athletes. The venue was located in close distance to sport venues for floor ball and floor hockey, speed and figure skating and other sports and events. Bus transport was provided for athletes competing in Schladming and Ramsau (alpine and cross country competitions).



Throughout the screening days over 770 health care professionals and students volunteered at the 7 screening venues. Most of the student volunteers and health care professionals were recruited from the University of Applied Science FH Joaneum in Graz as well as the Med Uni Graz and Vienna as well as from eye care institutes and schools in Hamm, Graz and Vienna. The screenings were also supported by non-clinical volunteers such as members of the Lions Clubs in Austria and other service providers.

In total over 6300 screenings and education have been performed throughout the seven disciplines.

Table 1 below shows the screening numbers per discipline:

| Discipline | Number of screenings |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Healthy Hearing | 1042 |
| Health Promotion | 583 |
| Opening Eyes | 1042 |
| Special Smiles | 1089 |
| FunFitness | 752 |
| Fit Feet | 1439 |
| Strong minds | 376 |



Table 2 below shows the main findings in key health indicators:

| | Global | |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | % | n |
| Special Smiles Total | 100.0 | 1089 |
| Untreated Tooth Decay* | 50.4 | 528 |
| Urgent Dental Referral* | 4.3 | 44 |
| Fit Feet Total | 100.0 | 1439 |
| Gait Abnormalities* | 49.9 | 605 |
| Urgent Referral* | 23.6 | 59 |
| Skin/Nail Conditions* | 64.7 | 881 |
| Opening Eyes Total | 100.0 | 1042 |
| Never Had an Eye Exam* | 27.0 | 321 |
| Last Eye Exam More Than 3 Years Ago* | 12.2 | 145 |
| Number of Referrals | 7.3 | 76 |
| Number of new prescriptions | 38.4 | 400 |
| Healthy Hearing Total | 100.0 | 1042 |
| Possible Hearing Loss* | 45.1 | 464 |
| Blocked or Partially Blocked Ear Canal* | 27.4 | 242 |
| Number of Referrals | 13.8 | 144 |
| Health Promotion Total | 100.0 | 583 |
| Hypertension (adults)* | 63.4 | 137 |
| Overweight (adults)* | 29.3 | 104 |
| Obese (adults)* | 19.7 | 70 |
| At Risk for Osteoporosis* | 1.1 | 2 |
| Fun Fitness Total | 100.0 | 752 |
| Flexibility Problems Identified* | 59.0 | 438 |
| Strength Problems Identified* | 19.9 | 148 |
| Balance Problems Identified* | 45.0 | 334 |
| Endurance Problems Identified* | 12.9 | 96 |

n = number with each health condition; * Percentages based on number of athletes who completed particular test or answered particular question

Breaking the results down to a Special Olympics Team of for example 10 players the numbers suggest that 5 out 10 players have untreated tooth decay, 6 athletes have issues with skin and nails in their feet such as ingrown nails, blisters or other skin irritations, almost 5 athletes have not passed hearing test and have potentially hearing problems, 3 athletes are overweight and 2 of them obese and 6 have problems with flexibility that increases the risk of injuries.



Additional EU Branded Promotional Items


Special Olympics
Health Promotion

Athlete Personal Health Report


Athlete's Name _____
Date _____ Location Graz, Austria

Today we measured 3 things that tell you about your health. We recommend that you share these results with your doctor.


- How much body fat you have (BMI) Your Body Mass Index is: _____
- How strong your bones are (BMD) Your Bone Mineral Density is: _____
- Your blood pressure (BP) Your Blood Pressure is: _____ / _____ in your Right Arm AND/OR _____ / _____ in your Left Arm

 **Body Mass Index or BMI**

low healthy high too high

 **Bone Mineral Density or BMD**

very low low healthy high

 **Blood Pressure or BP**


low healthy high very high

Don't forget to share this with your caregiver and doctor.

For more information, about the screening event, please contact Peyton Purcell, Sr. Manager, HP at ppurcell@specialolympics.org.

Notes: _____

Athlete's Personal Health Report 2017

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Additional EU Branded Promotional Items

Self-made ice tea

Ingredients

- 1,5 litre water
- 4 teabags of black tea
- 2 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2-3 tablespoon sugar or honey

Preparation
Bring the water to a boil. Pour it into a suitable mug. Put the 4 teabags, the sugar and the lemon juice in the water. Let the tea brew for about 5 minutes. Then put the teabags out and throw them away. Cool down the hot tea, for example in the fridge. When the tea is cold enough to call it 'ice tea' you can taste it. If it is needed you can add a little bit more sugar or lemon juice. Serve it with some ice cubes and a slice of lemon if you like.



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