

# Special Olympics Healthy Athletes®



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## What we do:

Healthy Athletes® is a Special Olympics program that provides free health screenings in a fun, welcoming environment that removes the anxiety and trepidation people with intellectual disabilities often experience when faced with a visit to a doctor or dentist. Our impact on the health and well-being of Special Olympics athletes around the world is great, in some cases saving lives by discovering unknown health issues or providing health care that otherwise would not be available.

We not only serve these athletes but also train health care professionals who then go back to their practices with increased knowledge of and compassion for people with intellectual disabilities.

## Screenings are offered in seven different health areas:



**Opening Eyes®:** Vision screening, refractive testing, glasses fabrication, and sunglasses and protective eyewear.



**Special Smiles™:** Dental screenings, education about proper brushing and flossing and the importance of diet to oral hygiene, mouth guards for contact sports, and referrals to community providers for necessary dental care.



**FUNfitness®:** Surveys general exercise habits, assesses flexibility, functional strength and balance and aerobic fitness, provides education about home exercises to improve performance, and facilitates community referrals as needed.



**Healthy Hearing:** Screenings of hearing acuity, custom swim earplugs, minor hearing aid repairs, consultations on hearing aids and noisy environments, and recommendations for medical or audiological evaluations.



**Fit Feet:** Evaluations of the skin, nails, bones and joints of the feet, examinations of the function of the feet and gait, and examinations of athletes' socks and shoes.



**Health Promotion:** is a free screening that offers health information and advice in the areas of nutrition, sun safety, bone density, tobacco cessation, and physical fitness. Health Promotion is designed to convey and reinforce key concepts on healthy living, healthy lifestyle choices, and nation-specific health issues.



**MedFest:** The MedFest program recruits volunteer physicians to provide the required physical examinations for people who wish to register in Special Olympics.

## Importance and Impact:

Despite a mistaken belief that people with intellectual disabilities receive the same or better health care than others, they typically receive sub-standard care or virtually no health care at all.

Health screenings have found that Special Olympics athletes are at increased risk of secondary health issues:

- 50% have at least one kind of skin or nail condition
- 37% have obvious, untreated tooth decay
- 27% fail hearing tests
- 22% have low bone density
- 15% have an eye disease



[www.somi.org](http://www.somi.org)

**Special Olympics**  
Michigan

