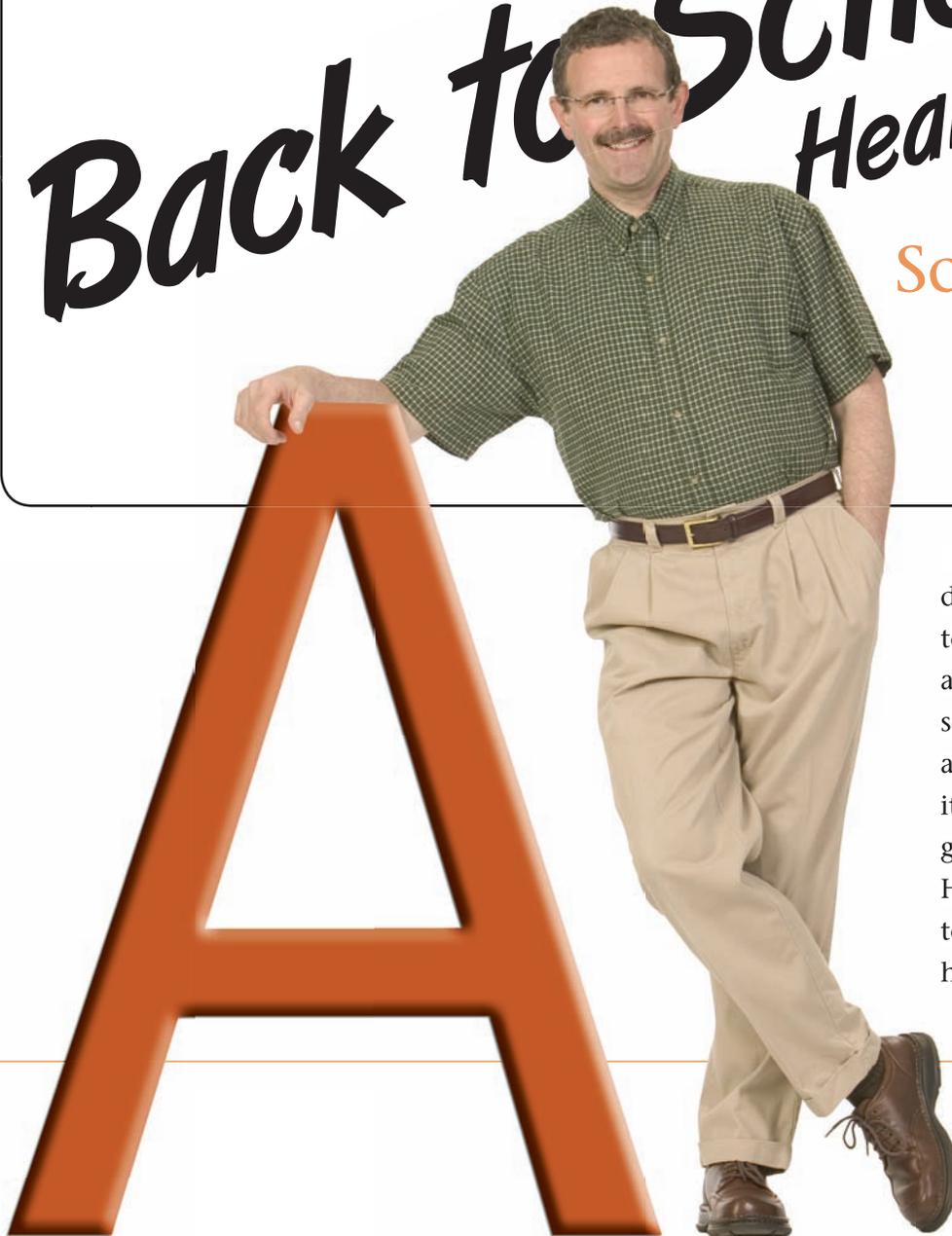


WRITTEN BY STEVEN E. PARNELL • PHOTO BY JEFF SILKER

Back to School Health Exams:

Score an **A+**
for your child



As summer begins to wind down, both kids and parents begin to think about school starting again. Besides the annual back-to-school shopping trip for supplies and a new first day of school outfit, it's often time to visit the doctor to get a checkup before school starts. Here are some thoughts for you to consider as you prepare for a healthy school year:▶

Can You Carnita?



Arizona Carnitas With Green Chiles

- 2 1/2 pounds boneless pork shoulder, cut into bite-size pieces*
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 large yellow onion, cut into thin slivers
- 1 4-oz. can diced green chiles, undrained
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- Flour tortillas OR corn tortillas
- Shredded Cheddar cheese
- Chopped tomato
- Sour cream

Cooking Directions

Heat oven to 350°. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large covered ovenproof pot over high heat. Add half of the pork cubes; sprinkle with half of the salt and half of the black pepper. Cook pork until starting to brown, stirring often. Remove pork. Repeat with remaining pork cubes, salt and black pepper, adding more oil if necessary. Drain drippings from pot. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in the same pot over medium heat. Cook onion in hot oil until tender. Stir in undrained chiles and garlic; cook for 2 minutes. Return pork to pot. Add chicken broth. Cover and bake for 1 hour. Serve pork in tortillas topped with Cheddar cheese, tomato and sour cream if desired. Serves 8 to 10.

* This recipe is perfect for pork shoulder, but any economical cut will work well.

Find more PORK recipes at
www.TheOtherWhiteMeat.com



Kindergarten

Kindergarten is a major turning point for your child. Even if they have attended preschool, they'll be expected to be much more grown up in "regular" school. Although the class may be no larger than before, it's part of a much bigger setting and mixing with older children can be a challenge. As school nears, talk with your child about their new routine and get them involved in choosing back-to-school clothes. Most schools open before classes begin so you can take your student in to see the school and meet their teacher. This helps to lessen their anxiety and build enthusiasm for that first big day.

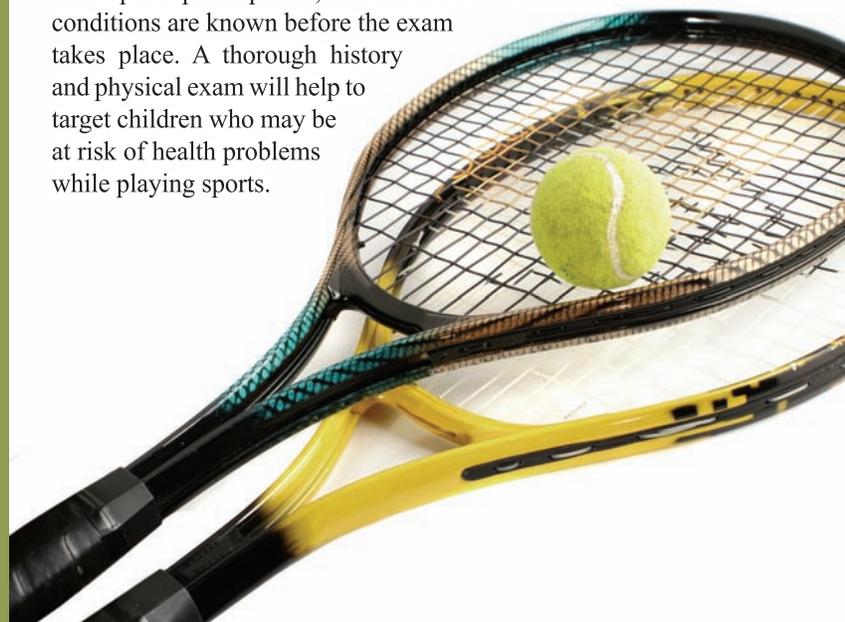
Prior to beginning school, children should have a thorough physical exam (many states require it). Your doctor will evaluate your child's vision – as many as one out of four children may have some type of visual impairment. Undetected this can lead to eyestrain, headaches, and fatigue and hinder a child's performance at school. Your doctor will also evaluate your child's hearing and overall physical development. It's also the time to make sure that their immunizations are up-to-date and give any boosters needed. This year in Minnesota a second chicken pox shot is required, unless there is a history of the disease. Kindergarteners are also due for boosters of their measles, mumps and rubella (MMR); polio; diphtheria, pertussis (also known as whooping cough) and tetanus (DPT). They may also be screened for anemia and lead toxicity with a blood test. High levels of lead are toxic and can cause learning disabilities if not detected and treated.

Seventh Grade

Students entering into seventh grade are required in Minnesota to get a booster of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DPT). They are also required now to get a second chicken pox shot if they have not had two immunizations or the disease.

Sports Physicals

In Minnesota, the State High School League sets forth recommendations that require all students involved in any sport – including cheerleading – to have a physical every three years. These sports physicals, also known as preparticipation physical examinations, are designed to ensure safe participation in sports. The report of deaths in young athletes in recent years has highlighted the need for a careful exam of all student athletes. Less than one percent of students have conditions that may limit their sports participation, and most of those conditions are known before the exam takes place. A thorough history and physical exam will help to target children who may be at risk of health problems while playing sports.



Medical History

This part of the sports exam includes questions about:

- Serious illnesses among other family members including death or disability from heart disease in anyone younger than fifty years of age.
- A family history of specific conditions such as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, long QT syndrome, Marfan syndrome, or clinically important heart rhythm problems linked to sudden death.
- Illnesses that your child had when younger such as asthma, diabetes, or epilepsy.
- Previous hospitalizations or surgeries.
- Allergies to medications and insect bites.
- Past injuries including concussions, sprains, and bone fractures.
- Whether your student has ever passed out, felt dizzy, had chest pain, or trouble breathing during exercise or sports play.
- Any history of a heart murmur or high blood pressure in the past.
- Any medications that your student is on including over-the-counter medications, herbal supplements, and prescription medications.

The medical history questions are usually on a form that you can help your student fill out, as they may not have knowledge of the family history. Patterns of illness in a family are a good indicator of potential conditions your child could face and allow for preventative health counseling to occur.

Physical Examination

During the physical examination your doctor will usually:

- Record your student's height and weight
- Take a blood pressure and pulse to check heart rate and rhythm
- Test their vision
- Check the heart, lungs, abdomen, ears, nose, and throat
- Evaluate your child's posture, joints, strength, and flexibility

Although most aspects of the exam are similar for both males and females, if your student has started or gone through puberty they may be asked different questions. For example if a girl is heavily involved in a lot of active sports they may be asked about her menstrual periods and diet to be sure she is not at risk for thinning of her bones if her periods are suppressed by a low body fat content.

Your doctor should also ask questions about the use of recreational drugs, alcohol, or dietary supplements for weight loss or energy boosters. This will include steroids or other so called performance enhancers, because they can affect a person's health and the effects can be magnified by the stresses of intense physical activity.

A sports physical can help your child find out and deal with health problems that might interfere with their participation in a sport. For example, if they have frequent asthma attacks your doctor might be able to prescribe a different type of inhaler or adjust the dosage so that they can breathe more easily when they run.

Your doctor may have good training tips and be able to give your son or daughter some ideas for avoiding injuries. They may recommend specific exercises or strengthening activities if there is a history of frequent ankle sprains. Advice like this can make your student a better, stronger athlete.

It also is a chance for your doctor to discuss other important topics, such as how they are doing in school, to screen for problems with depression or nutrition, and discuss safety and injury prevention from wearing bike helmets to seat belts and determine if they are at risk from sexual activity or substance abuse.▶

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A few final thoughts about your child's health during the school year... Students who have a temperature of 100°F or greater should be kept home from school. Children with oozing skin rashes, green-yellow drainage from eyes, ears or nose, a productive cough, vomiting, or diarrhea should remain home until the symptoms have been absent for 24 hours. Students should be on antibiotics for 24-48 hours before returning to school. Students with active infestations of head lice should stay home until they have received effective treatment including removal of nits from their hair. Although you may be tempted to think twice about keeping them home if it means missing work for you or your spouse, you will appreciate it when other parents do so and spare your child from one of the many contagious diseases that make their rounds of the classroom each year.

Remember that a physician's order is needed for medications requiring daily or "as needed" administration during school hours. Most medications given three times daily can be given at home before and after school and at bedtime. If it is necessary to give medications at school, ask your pharmacist for a separate labeled container for any medications to taken to school. Restrictions in physical activity, including physical education and outdoor recess, should be noted by your physician. If your child has asthma, the school nurse should have an inhaler and a care plan noting your child's triggers and baseline pulmonary function such as the peak expiratory flow.

Young Adult Children

If your son or daughter is headed off to college they will need a physical exam done as part of their admission criteria. Most schools are also recommending their students living in crowded dormitories be given the meningitis vaccine as a precaution.

A healthy school year gives kids a head start on having a successful learning experience. Let's hope each athlete has a safe and successful season and that all those five-year-olds getting their shots will soon forget the discomfort and enjoy the last few days of summer! *W*

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