

### **ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WISH TO TAKE PART IN SPORT**

Watson, A W. S.

University of Limerick, Ireland

Physical assessment prior to sports participation can help (1) the individual to avoid activities that will place them in danger (2) minimise the risk of sports injuries (3) suggest ways of improving training thus ultimately increasing athletic performance. All individuals wishing to take part in sport should be assessed but the length and complexity of the assessment necessary will vary with the individual. For example:

1. Healthy children and young adults taking up low-risk recreational sports can be assessed using a health questionnaire such as PARQ questionnaire.
2. Older adults, people who have not exercised for several years, and people with chronic illness should be advised by a physician and a sports physiotherapist.
3. Athletes involved in competitive sport on a regular basis should receive (a) health and injuries questionnaire (b) fitness tests (c) posture assessment.
4. It is particularly important for children to receive a full posture test because playing sport can cause posture defects.
5. Athletes with an above average incidence of injuries should receive a complete posture test and physical examination.
6. Top level athletes should receive complete posture and physical examinations, dental, eye and feet examination, diet analysis, sports specific fitness tests.

These assessments should result in specific training advice being given to each individual athlete. It is vital that the contributions of the different professionals carrying out the assessment are co-ordinated so that the athlete receives clear advice (Watson, 1995). In an assessment of top-level cyclists the percentage found to have medical, physiotherapy, eye and dental defects were respectively: - 19%, 20%, 20% and 23% (Callaghan and Jarvis, 1996).

#### **REFERENCES**

- Watson AWS: Physical Fitness and Athletic Performance (second edition). London, Longmans, 1995.  
Callaghan MJ, Jarvis C: Evaluation of elite British cyclists: the role of the squad medical. *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 30: 349-53, 1996.