Special Olympics Illinois

Health Initiatives 101

Taylor Combs, Director of Health & Wellness

so i did.

What to expect today:

- This session will focus on our health and wellness efforts including:
  - Sport specific warm-up and cool-down resources
  - Fitness Opportunities
  - Health Messenger and Fitness Captains programs
  - Healthy Athletes and Healthy Habits

Special Olympics Illinois

Healthy Athletes

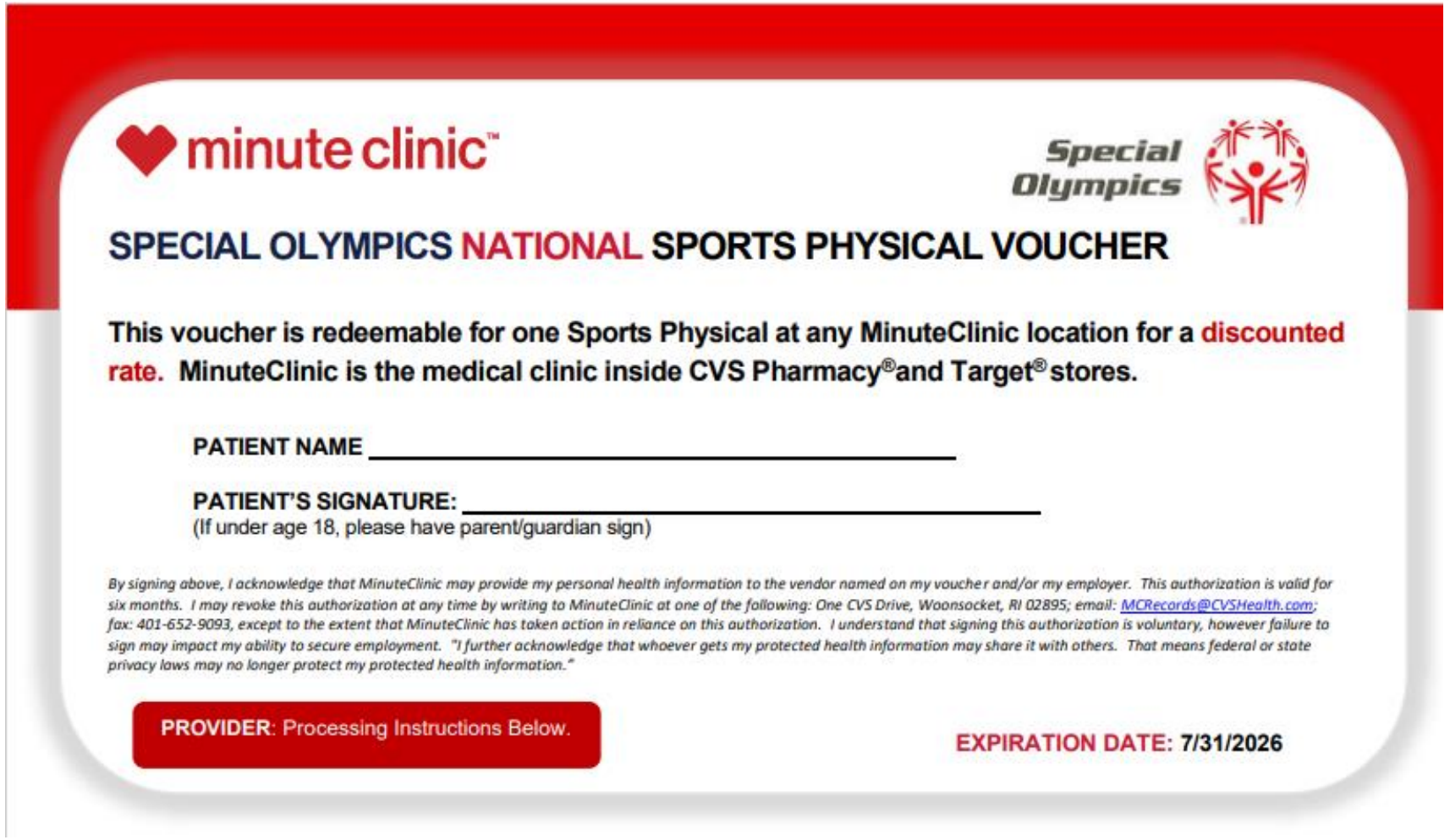
Special Olympics Illinois

Healthy Athletes - background

- Since 1997, Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® has been providing free health screenings and education to athletes in a supportive, inclusive, and fun environment.
- What began as a groundbreaking initiative has now grown into a global movement delivering over 2 million free health screenings and training nearly 300,000 health professionals and students to better serve individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Here in Illinois, we are proud to contribute to this impact with an average of 18 health clinics and 1,900 screenings annually across the state.

Healthy Athletes

MinuteClinic Vouchers



minute clinic™

Special Olympics

SPECIAL OLYMPICS NATIONAL SPORTS PHYSICAL VOUCHER

This voucher is redeemable for one Sports Physical at any MinuteClinic location for a discounted rate. MinuteClinic is the medical clinic inside CVS Pharmacy® and Target® stores.

PATIENT NAME _____

PATIENT'S SIGNATURE: _____
(If under age 18, please have parent/guardian sign)

By signing above, I acknowledge that MinuteClinic may provide my personal health information to the vendor named on my voucher and/or my employer. This authorization is valid for six months. I may revoke this authorization at any time by writing to MinuteClinic at one of the following: One CVS Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895; email: MCRecords@CVSHealth.com; fax: 401-652-9093, except to the extent that MinuteClinic has taken action in reliance on this authorization. I understand that signing this authorization is voluntary, however failure to sign may impact my ability to secure employment. "I further acknowledge that whoever gets my protected health information may share it with others. That means federal or state privacy laws may no longer protect my protected health information."

PROVIDER: Processing Instructions Below.

EXPIRATION DATE: 7/31/2026

Expanding Healthy Athletes through Community Partners

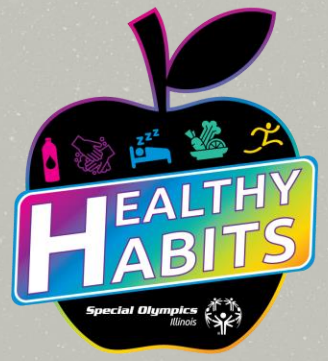
- **What we do:**
  - Partner with healthcare clinics, universities and students to host health screenings and education events to provide year-round health opportunity for athletes
  - Across the state, we are supported by Advocate, Advent, UIC, OSF, University of Illinois, LakeLand College, Growing Smiles Pediatrics, SIUE, SIUC, ISU and more dedicated healthcare providers

- **Why it matters:**
  - Expanding beyond just state competitions

- **Know a healthcare professional? Help us grow!**
  - Doctors, nurses, PT/OTs, audiologists, podiatrist, mental health providers, optometrists, EMTs, more!

Special Olympics Illinois

Healthy Habits



Healthy Habits

- Our Healthy Habits program delivers educational content through fun, interactive activities designed to empower athletes, coaches, parents, and partners
- Goal is to provide resources to improve overall health and enhance sport performance
- These stations can be led by athlete leaders, medical students and professionals, and general volunteers

- Various health topics include nutrition, hydration, sun safety, clean hands & hygiene, goal setting, strong minds, sleep soundly, physical activity and tobacco avoidance

Healthy Habits in Action!

Special Olympics Illinois

Health Messenger

Health Messengers

A Health Messenger is a Special Olympics athlete who has been trained to serve as a health and wellness leader, educator, advocate and role model within their Special Olympics communities and the community at large.

Fitness Captains

Fitness Captains

- Fitness Captains are athletes on a sports team who lead the team in activities related to fitness and a healthy lifestyle.
- Fitness Captains have a passion for fitness and healthy habits.
- Fitness Captains can use their leadership and communication skills to encourage and empower fellow athletes to be healthy and fit on all Special Olympics teams

Fitness Captains

- Through a peer-led programming model, athletes will have the opportunity to learn health-related information from a teammate who shares their experiences as an athlete and a person with an intellectual disability.
- Fitness Captains will:
  - Lead warm-ups and cool-downs at practices, trainings, competitions
  - Teach Healthy Habits

How to become a Fitness Captain?

- To be eligible, athlete must:
  - Be a certified Athlete Leader
  - Be nominated by their coach

- Fitness Captain Training
  - Attend to Spring ALU
  - Virtual meets with Taylor
  - Complete activation project

Sports Coach	Fitness Captain
• Leader of every practice • Determines the order of practice • Teaches sport skills and drills • Addresses issues and challenges	• Helps lead the warm-up and cool-downs • Role model for their teammates • Shares a health tip at each practice

Special Olympics Illinois

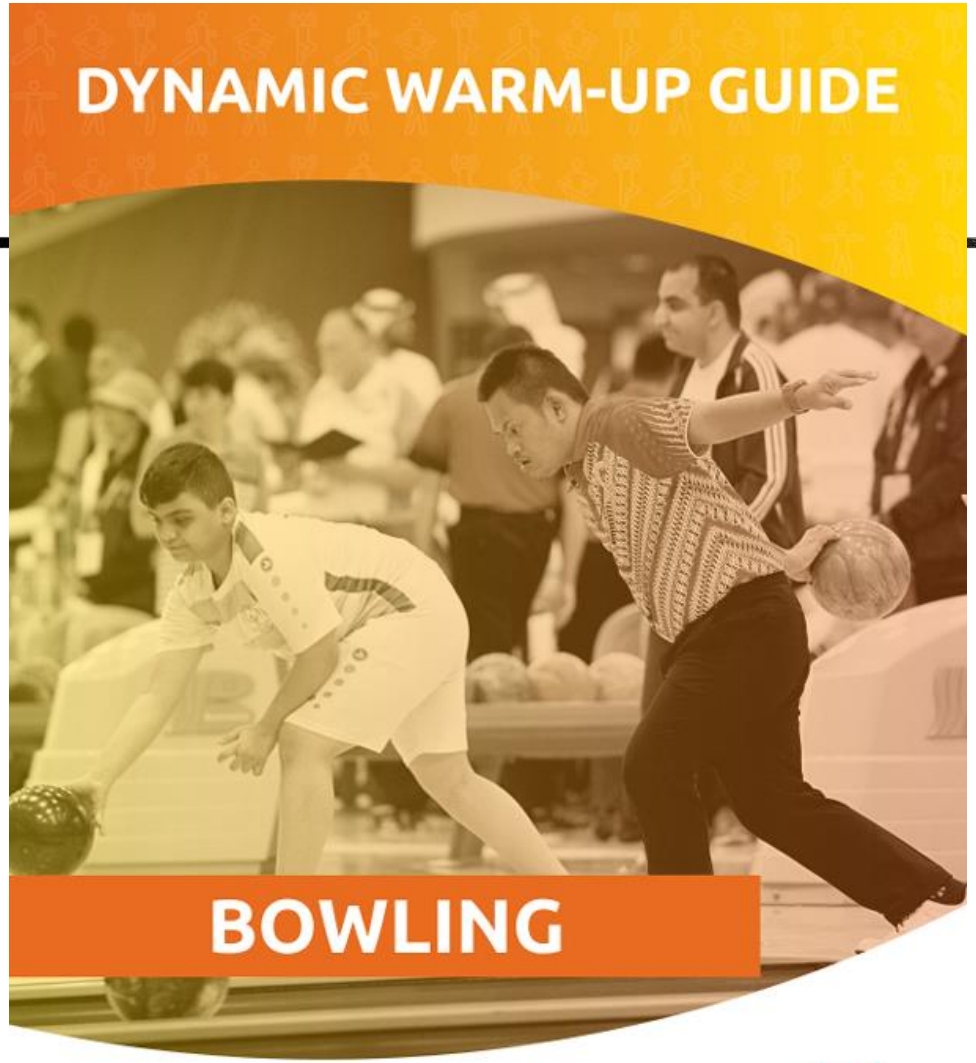
Sport-Specific Resources

FIT5

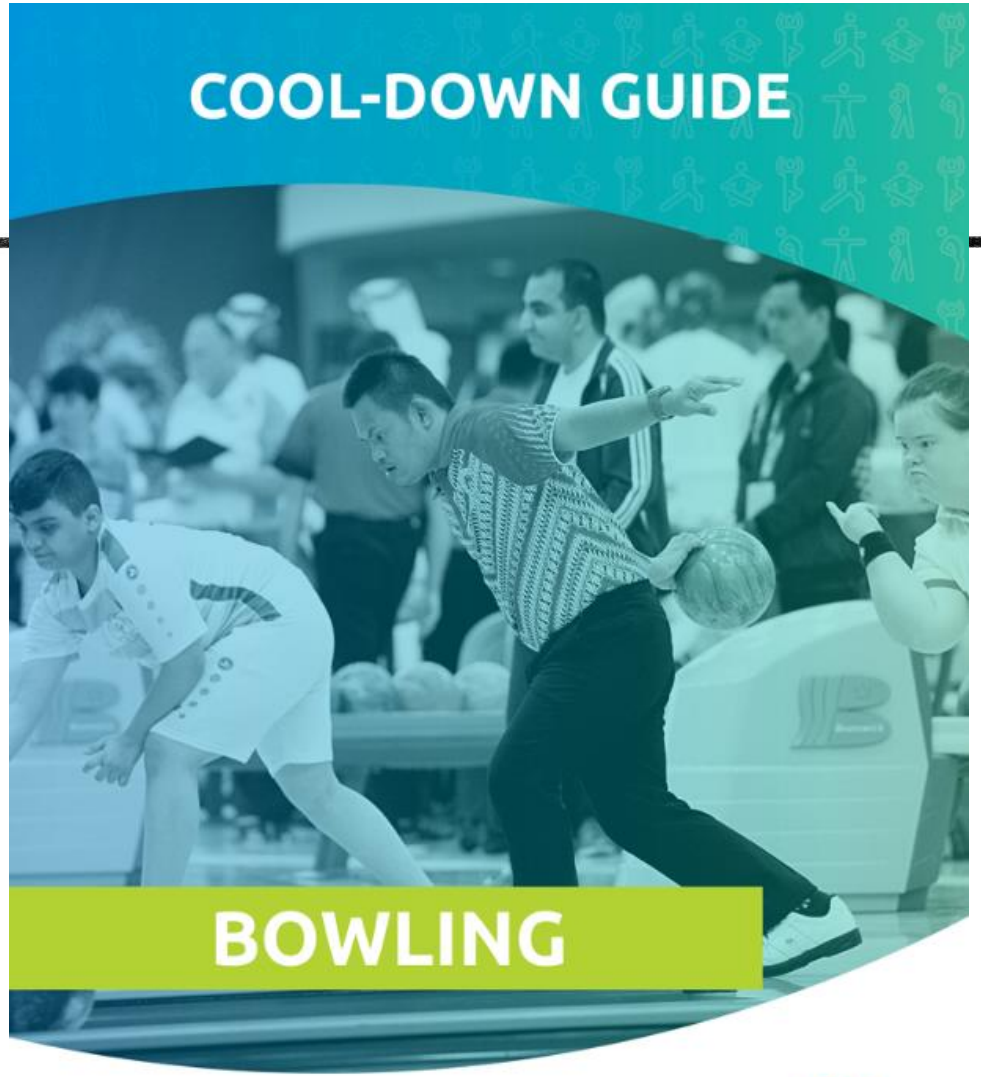
FIT 5

How to get your
FIT 5
A guide to achieving fitness and your personal best with physical activity, nutrition, and hydration.
Special Olympics

FIT 5
Fitness Cards
Flexibility
Strength



Special Olympics



Special Olympics

Looking for our free legacy planning resources? Click here!

Special Olympics | RESOURCES

Categories General Protective Behaviors DONATE EN

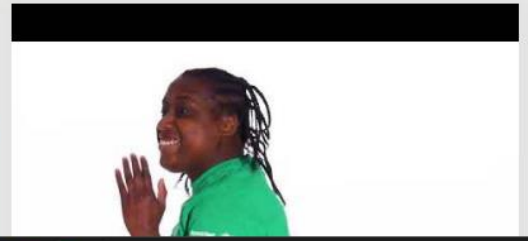
Warm-Up and Cool-Down Videos

Dynamic Warm-Ups and Cool-Downs are an important part of every workout, training session, or competition. Follow along with these videos to learn how to perform the different exercises in the sport-specific warm-up and cool-down guides. Questions? Please email fitness@specialolympics.org

Accessibility

Warm-Up

A warm-up should be the first physical activity in every training session or competition to help you reach a state of physical and mental readiness. After you complete an aerobic activity, you will want to dynamic stretch.



95°F Mostly sunny

Search

2:56 PM 8/19/2025

Coach Education | FAQ-Fitness-for-Sports-Coaches | Fitness-Family-Involvement-Opps | Injury-Prevention-Tips-2019.docx | Active-Practice-Overview-2019.dc | Print

https://resources.specialolympics.org/health/fitness/fitness-through-sport/coach-education

Sign in

Looking for our free legacy planning resources? Click here!

Special Olympics | RESOURCES

Categories General Protective Behaviors DONATE EN

Coach Education

Accessibility

Special Olympics athletes trust their coaches will help them reach their personal best both within and outside of sport. Coaches are eager to help their athletes live a healthy lifestyle to improve both the health and sports performance of our athletes. These resources were designed to support

Special Olympics Illinois

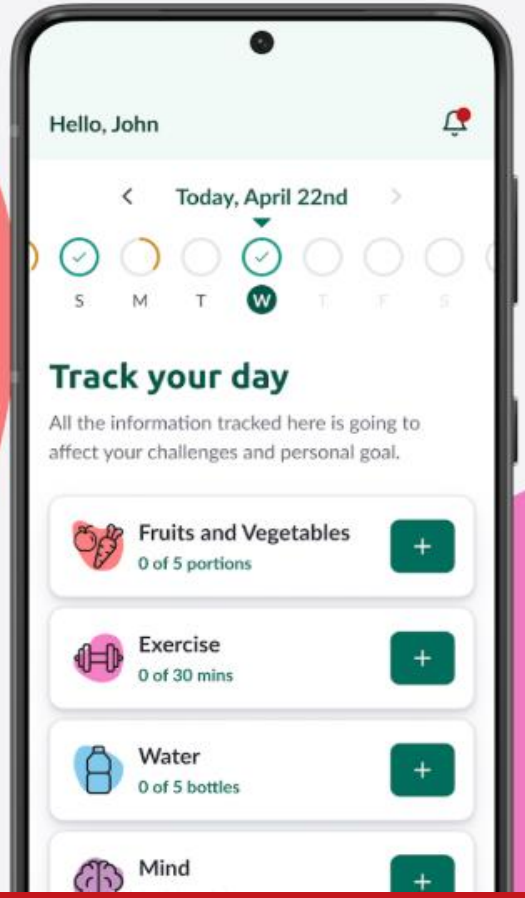
Fitness Opportunities

SO Fitness App

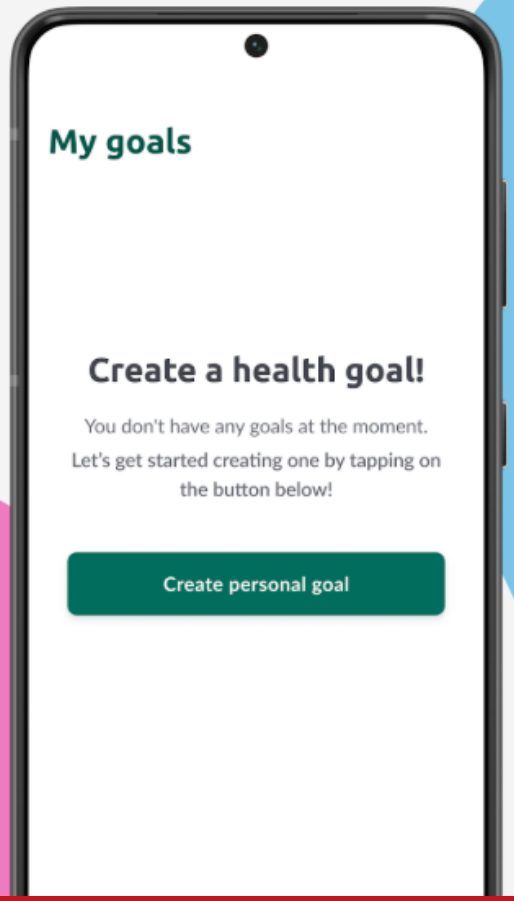
- What this app offers:
  - Seamless integration with Apple Watch, Fitbit, and Samsung/Google wearables (*wearables are optional and not required to participate*)
  - Weekly fitness challenges covering topics like mental health, nutrition, and exploring new forms of movement
  - Daily tracking for exercise, fruit and vegetable servings, and water intake

Let's get moving with the SO Fitness App!

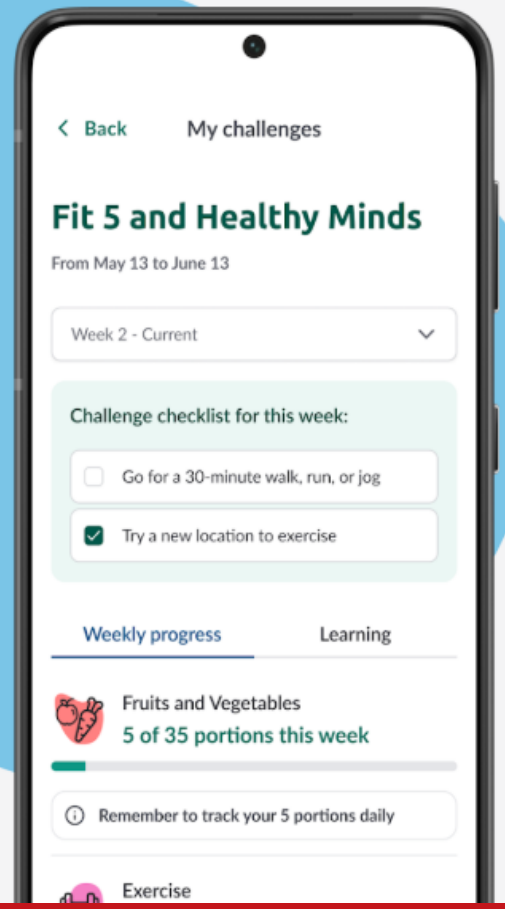
Track your progress to improve all areas of fitness



Create personalized goals to level up your health



Join challenges, and get helpful tips to stay motivated!



SO Fitness App Download

- iPhone/Apple

- Android/Google

Scan QR code to register!

Monday November 10

6:30PM-7:30PM CST ON ZOOM

FITNESS

Athletes, coaches, family members and friends of all abilities are welcome!
The workout will feature a warm-up, exercise circuit & cool-down stretches.

Special Olympics Illinois

We want to hear from you!

Open Floor Discussion

- What would you like to learn more from us?
- Are there any specific health or wellness topics that you feel would benefit your athletes?
- What challenges do you face in supporting health and wellness in your role?
- What other health and wellness resources would be beneficial?

Special Olympics Illinois

Thank you!

Taylor Combs

Director of Health & Wellness – tcombs@soill.org

Carolyn Cronin

Director of Coach and Health Services – ccronin@soill.org