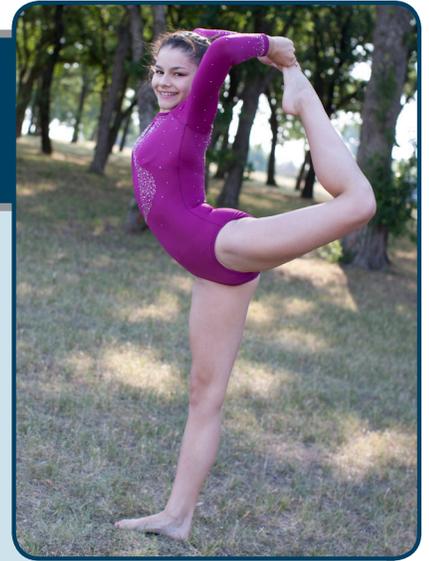


Gymnastics injury prevention



Each year, more than 86,000 gymnastics injuries are seen in doctors' offices. Overuse and stress on the body are the most common causes. Gymnasts also get traumatic injuries. Most of the time, injuries are not severe. It is important to see a doctor to avoid long-lasting pain.

What are overuse injuries?

- Repeated motions cause overuse injuries. Common overuse injuries include stress fractures and tendinitis, which is inflammation of a tendon. These most often happen at the wrists, feet, legs and back.

What are traumatic injuries?

- Traumatic injuries happen because of falls or impact. These are often sprains of connective tissue around the joint (ligaments), strains of muscles and dislocations of the knee cap or shoulder.

How can injuries be prevented?

- Work with a coach who knows how to prevent injury and can correct your child's form.
- Make sure your child is in the right class for their age and skill level.
- Stretch and strengthen your muscles! These muscles can include:
 - front of the hip (hip flexors)
 - inside of the leg (adductors)
 - outside of leg (IT band/abductors)
 - back of hip (gluteals and piriformis)
 - front of thigh (quadriceps)
 - back of thigh (hamstrings)
 - calves (gastroc/soleus)
 - back/trunk/neck (stretch in all directions)
 - shoulder girdle (posterior capsule, triceps, pectorals)
- Do activities that work on balance and help you know where your body is in space.
- Use safety gear. This can include wrist braces, grips and footwear.
- Use chalk on hands or feet when needed to prevent falls and slips.
- Always check floor and equipment before use for safety.
- Limit practice time. Many injuries happen when we get too tired.
- Drink water 30 minutes before practice and as needed during practice.

Warm up guidelines:

- It is important to warm up. This helps the body get ready to handle the bursts of energy the sport needs. An average warm up should take 15 to 25 minutes.
- Start with light movements to get the heart rate up and warm up muscles.
- Then perform dynamic stretches. These are stretches that move through your range of motion.
- Work on core stability and balance activities.
- At the end of practice, spend time stretching your whole body. Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds. An average stretching program should last 10 to 15 minutes.

Gymnastic conditioning programs:

Some common gymnastic conditioning programs include:

- Yoga
- Pilates technique
- Alexander technique
- Formal ballet

This handout is for information purposes only. It does not replace medical advice from a qualified doctor or physical therapist. Cook Children's Medical Center will not be responsible for any harm or injury resulting from interpretation of the materials.