



Cheerleading Injuries

Today, cheerleading is an athletic activity that incorporates dance and gymnastics along with stunts. An estimated 3.3 million people in the U.S. are cheerleaders. While cheerleading is meant to support an athletic team, intense competitions at the high school and collegiate levels have created increased risk for injury.

What types of injuries are most common in cheerleading?

Cheerleading injuries tend to be more severe, making up more than half of the catastrophic injuries in female athletes. These injuries tend to affect all areas of the body – the wrists, shoulders, ankles, head and neck.

How can injuries be prevented?

Stunt restrictions

In an attempt to curb the amount of catastrophic injuries in cheerleading, restrictions have been placed on stunts. Cheerleaders should not attempt a stunt if they are tired, injured, or ill, as this may disrupt their focus and cause the stunt to be performed in an unsafe manner. Precautions should always be taken during inclement weather for all stunts.

Pyramids Guidelines

- No higher than 2 body lengths for the high school level
- 2.5 body lengths for the college level
- Base cheerleader must always be in direct contact with the performing surface
- Base supporters must remain stationary
- Suspended cheerleaders are not allowed to be inverted or rotated on dismount

Basket Toss Restrictions (cheerleader thrown into the air)

- Only four throwers are allowed to keep the flyer from going too high
- The flyer is not allowed to drop the head below a horizontal plane with the torso
- One of the throwers must remain behind the flyer at all times during the toss
- Mats should be used during practice sessions

Performance Training

As with any sport, proper conditioning and performance training are important to minimize injury. Remember, techniques, tricks and stunts must be learned only as part of a well-balanced training program. Below are examples of training that can help improve cheerleading.

- Resistance exercises help gain strength in the lower back, stomach and shoulders
- Regular stretching, yoga or Pilates instruction to improve flexibility
- Speak with a sports medicine professional or athletic trainer for other training tips and injury prevention strategies

Need immediate treatment for a cheerleading injury?

The Children's HealthSM Andrews Institute for Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine offers treatment for all sport-related injuries. Call to book your appointment today. With same-day and next-day appointments, we can get you in and back in the game.

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