

Cheerleading Injuries on the Rise

Cheerleading is a popular activity. Most cheerleaders are girls. U.S. hospital ERs treated almost 209,000 cheerleaders from 1990 to 2002. Since then, the number of cheerleading injuries has increased by 110%.

Researchers believe that the true number of cheerleaders injured is even greater. Many are treated in doctor's offices or by trainers.

Injuries include:

- strains,
- sprains,
- cuts,
- fractures,
- concussions,
- closed head injuries, and
- skull and spinal fractures.



Cheerleading has changed. It is more than chants, cheers, pom poms and clapping hands. Cheerleading today involves gymnastics, tosses, human pyramids and partner stunts. It is an activity that demands skill and athletics. Cheerleading has become a year round activity. Cheerleaders attend summer camps, cheer for sports and compete.

What can help reduce the number and severity of cheerleading injuries?

- Encourage cheerleaders to warm up before practice or perform. They should do stretches and exercises like other athletes.
- Make sure teens have a properly trained and certified coach. The American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Advisors (AACCA) offers training.
- Have a certified coach present when they practice and perform.
- Provide safety guidelines from AACCA. Give them to coaches, parents and teens. The Spirit Rule Book, published by the National Federation of State High School Associations, is another good resource.
- Ask the school for proper equipment. This includes mats.
- Offer training in gymnastics and cheerleading stunts.
- Observe teens as they practice. Make sure they master each cheerleading skill. Then, they can try more advanced stunts.

Cheerleading is a demanding sport. Like any sport, it has risks of injury. Partner with your school to help keep your teen as safe as possible.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.