

Cheerleading

Cheerleading is a competitive athletic activity that incorporates stunts comprised of the elements of dance and gymnastics. Over the past forty years, cheerleading has changed significantly. Although cheerleading is meant to support an athletic team, competitions have now been developed. These competitions are intense, vigorous, and have increased the risk for injury.

What are the most common types of injuries in cheerleading?

Cheerleading has its share of common sprains and strains; however, because of the stunts and basket tosses, cheerleading injuries have the potential to be catastrophic. Injuries can happen all over the body, but the most commonly affected areas are the face, neck, shoulders, wrist and ankles. Concussions can also occur in cheerleading.

Due to the nature of the sport, bruises or contusions are very common in cheerleading. Contusions are best initially treated with ice, compression and elevation of the affected area.

Preventing cheerleading injuries

Stunt Restrictions

Restrictions have been placed on stunts and basket tosses to decrease the risk of injury in cheerleading. There is now a height restriction on human pyramids and a maximum of four throwers to one flyer allowed for basket tosses. There must be a spotter for every person lifted above shoulder level.

During practice, mats should be used. If a cheerleader is ill, tired, or injured, they should not stunt. This not only puts the cheerleader at risk, but their teammates as well.

If stunting in inclement weather, precautions should always be taken. Cheerleaders should only attempt a stunt with proper training and the cheerleader should be confident and comfortable in performing the stunt.



How can injuries in cheerleading be prevented?

- Incorporate resistance training to improve strength
- Stretch regularly to improve flexibility
- Implement a core strengthening program to improve balance
- Supervision should be provided at all times during stunting routines
- Return to activity only when clearance is granted by a healthcare professional
- Consult a sports medicine professional or athletic trainer with any concerns about particular injuries or prevention methods