

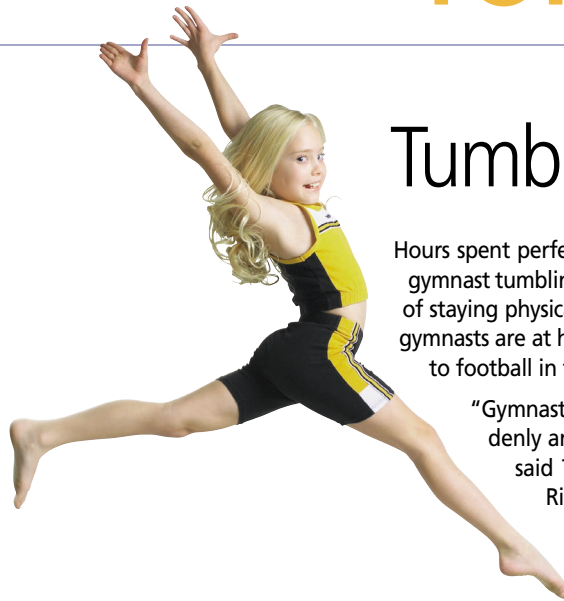
Bone & Joint News for Coaches

TRI RIVERS SURGICAL
ASSOCIATES, INC.

JULY 2006

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Tumbling Toward Injury

Hours spent perfecting handsprings and backflips may have your young gymnast tumbling toward injury. Gymnastics offers athletes the benefits of staying physically active while teaching discipline and teamwork, but gymnasts are at high risk for injury. In fact, gymnastics ranks second only to football in the number of athletes injured annually.

"Gymnasts are at risk for both traumatic injuries that occur suddenly and repetitive stress conditions that develop over time," said Trenton M. Gause, M.D., orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates. "Because the upper extremities are not designed to bear weight, repeated stress on the joints — particularly the wrists — causes a high incidence of injuries."

Injuries common to young gymnasts include stress fractures, strains, sprains and low back pain, as well as knee and ankle conditions caused by repetitive use.

According to Dr. Gause, minor injuries — which often result in minimal loss of mobility or mild to moderate pain — can usually be treated at home with a few simple measures.

Rest the injured area for several days, apply ice to it to reduce swelling, wrap the affected area and use an age- and weight-appropriate over-the-counter medication to alleviate the pain, if necessary. These conservative treatments for minor injuries should allow a gradual return to activity within a few days to a week.

More serious injuries, such as fractures, require medical treatment to promote healing and prevent lasting damage to the musculoskeletal system. If you suspect your gymnast has been injured, have him or her stop competing immediately. Care from a medical professional is needed when:

- The injury causes swelling, instability, deformity or other obvious changes in the bone or joint
- The gymnast experiences recurring pain or sustains frequent injuries to the same area
- Pain and swelling do not improve within 24 to 48 hours

The good news is that by taking a few preventive measures, many minor injuries can be avoided and serious injuries can be minimized.

"Young gymnasts should be encouraged to begin each practice session by performing the appropriate stretching regimen to loosen the muscles. For athletes who have had a prior injury, special braces are available to stabilize and support the ankle, knee, elbow and wrist. After an injury, a special exercise program and physical therapy should be utilized to strengthen the affected joint," said Dr. Gause.

To help prevent injury, be sure that you are applying techniques and workout programs that are specific to the athlete's age and skill level, while also providing appropriate spotting.



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Sports Medicine

Did You Know...

- Drinking milk at a young age can help prevent osteoporosis, a bone-weakening disease that affects 28 million Americans? The recommended amount of calcium for children is 1,300 milligrams a day. So get your calcium now to help prevent osteoporosis later in life.
- Foods such as milk, cheese, yogurt, broccoli, lettuce and salmon are a good source of calcium and vitamin D, which both contribute to healthy bones?
- Carbonated beverages can interfere with calcium absorption? The phosphates in carbonated beverages bind with calcium and eliminate it through the gut without being absorbed.

Ask the Doctor



What Is Little League Elbow?

"Little league elbow is a condition that affects pitchers and other players who throw repetitively," said D. Kelly Agnew, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates. "Injury occurs when continued throwing irritates and inflames the tendons and ligaments surrounding the elbow."

The player typically experiences a gradual onset of pain, but injury can occur with one hard throw or an awkward fall to the elbow. "Symptoms associated with little league elbow include pain, both at rest and while pitching, and swelling, particularly at the knobby bump inside the elbow. Restricted range of motion and locking of the joint may also signal an elbow injury," said Dr. Agnew, who is a team physician for the Mars Planets and the Pine-Richland Rams.

If you suspect one of your players may be suffering from little league elbow, have him rest the affected arm and apply ice packs to reduce swelling. The athlete can resume play after resting for a few days. If pain returns or conservative treatment does not help, the player should seek medical attention.

A physician's examination and an X-ray will accurately diagnose the source of pain. Younger children often respond well to conservative therapies. In severe cases, a splint or surgery may be required.

"You should expect your player to be out of the throwing game anywhere from six weeks to three months, depending on injury severity. In all cases, rest is crucial to a successful recovery," said Dr. Agnew.

To help prevent little league elbow, Dr. Agnew recommends that coaches pay close attention to pitch counts and not allow young pitchers to strain their elbow throwing curve balls and sliders.

Do you have a question about sports injuries in young athletes? E-mail us at mail@tririversortho.com, and look for the answer in an upcoming issue.

Tri Rivers Physician Named "Top Doc"



Tri Rivers Surgical Associates is pleased to announce that Robert L. Waltrip, M.D., has been named a top doctor in both the Pittsburgh region and the country. Dr. Waltrip is currently featured in *Pittsburgh Magazine's* 2006 Top Doctors listing and the *America's Top Doctors* guide published annually by Castle Connolly Medical Ltd.

Dr. Waltrip, a sports medicine and shoulder specialist, attended Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, completed his internship and residency at the University of Pittsburgh and a sports medicine fellowship at the internationally renowned American Sports Medicine Institute in Alabama. There he refined his skills in sports medicine, and arthroscopic and joint replacement surgery. He has also lectured on health education and served as team physician for athletes at various competitive levels. Dr. Waltrip is board certified in orthopedic surgery.



Calling All Coaches



Nominate Your MVP

Do you know an all-star player, team or coach who has recently bounced back from a sports injury? Send us an e-mail to mail@tririversortho.com, and let us know why you think your nominee is an MVP. Don't forget to include a photo. Your all-star may appear in an upcoming issue.

Wet Your Whistle

Did you know that your bones and muscles contain 22 percent and 73 percent water, respectively?

Next to oxygen, water is the most important nutrient needed to keep the body functioning properly. Water helps the body regulate its temperature, transport nutrients, assist with digestive and other body functions and moisten the skin.

"The body's need for water increases during physical activity," said Michael W. Weiss, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates. "It's important for you and your team to maintain proper hydration before, during and after activity."

To stay hydrated, make sure your team begins drinking water an hour or two before a game or practice. Keep plenty of water available during play to replenish fluid lost through perspiration.

"Thirst, dry mouth and dry throat signal that the body is already short on fluid," said Dr. Weiss. "If your players experience any of these symptoms, have them take a break to rehydrate."

Coaches should also be aware of other symptoms of dehydration, which may include lightheadedness, dizziness, muscle cramps, dry skin, nausea, headaches or fatigue.



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