Injury Care for Gymnasts

Personalized Care • Same Day Appointments • Tips for Prevention

When you visit the team at HealthPartners Orthopaedic & Sports Medicine, you’ll find we are different than others. In fact, it’s our goal to keep you active and get you back in the game as quickly and safely as possibly — and we’re not here to say that you can’t compete. This is because we understand the passion for participation and want to keep you doing what you love throughout your lifetime. Our staff has experience treating gymnastics related injuries, and our partners in physical therapy include former gymnasts and coaches. Our family of care also includes access to sports medicine doctors, surgeons, athletic trainers, physical therapists and others all at the same location. Everyone will work closely together to create a treatment plan specific to your needs. We are committed to keeping you on the mat.

About Gymnastics Injuries

Though gymnastics is considered a non-contact sport, on average gymnasts are injured nearly four times per year. The most common injuries for female gymnasts are ankle and knee injuries followed by the wrist. Male gymnasts are more prone to injuries to the shoulder and wrist, followed by the ankle. It is important to recognize the risk of injury and take precautions to prevent it.

Common risk factors for injuries

• Overuse (motions constantly repeated)
• Improper technique or equipment
• Training more than 15-20 hours per week
• Previous injury
• Growth spurts
• Life stress

When should you seek advice from a medical provider?

• If an injury is accompanied by a “pop” sound
• If you cannot bear weight or
• If pain, swelling, deformity and/or loss of motion persists over time
Injury Reference Guide for Gymnasts

General tips for injury prevention

• Always warm-up for practice and competition. Injuries are twice as likely to happen during competition
• Have trained spotters when possible
• Use protective equipment as recommended
• Ensure there are adequate landing mats
• Practice good landing techniques
• Be careful in dismounts and landings where injuries are most common

Common Injuries

Ankle Sprains: Ankle sprains can occur on landing, by taking a misstep or by planting the foot awkwardly. Typically, the ankle rolls away from the body and the gymnast may hear a pop. A sprain may be accompanied by swelling and/or bruising. A brace or taping the ankle may help in recovery and future injury prevention. If you cannot stand on the ankle, or experience persistent pain, swelling or deformity you should consult your sports medicine doctor.

Knee Injuries: Knee (ACL or anterior crucial ligament) injuries often occur in a short landing or are due to over rotation while tumbling, dismounting or vaulting. An ACL injury will often be accompanied by a pop sound and swelling within hours. A sports medicine doctor should be consulted as soon as possible after an ACL injury.

Wrist and Shoulder Injuries: Unlike most athletes, gymnasts use their upper extremities to bear weight and injuries are common. Sprains and strains are the most common injury, but stress injuries and fractures also occur. If a gymnast starts to feel pain in an upper extremity, training should be reduced and should only include pain free activities. If the pain continues to be limiting, consult a sports medicine doctor.

Back Injuries: Back injuries are common in gymnasts. Many of the injuries are due to repetitive hyperextension and rotation of the lower spine. Back injuries can include stress fractures and a vertebrae slipping forward. As with other injuries, modify your training to only pain free activities. If the pain interrupts everyday activities, consult a sports medicine doctor.

General tips for injury recovery:

• Rest
• PRICE (Protect, Rest, Ice, Compress, Elevate)
• Tape or brace the injured area
• Modify your training
Consult your sports medicine doctor if pain persists throughout recovery.

For more information, visit healthpartners.com/ortho.
To schedule an appointment, call 651-254-8300.