



Penridge Pediatric Associates

Pointers and Pearls

Summer 2008

GYMNASTICS

If your child flies through the air with the greatest of ease, she could “land” in the hospital. Gymnastics sends more than 26,000 children to emergency rooms every year. In fact, it ranks as high as soccer and basketball as a leading cause of injury in athletes. Young girls experience the most gymnastic injuries. From 1990 to 2005:

- More than 425,000 6- to 17-year-olds were hurt while participating in gymnastics
- The majority, 82%, of the gymnastics-related injuries were to girls
- The average age of injured young gymnasts was 11

Children ages 6 to 11 were more likely to get hurt at home where they often practice unsupervised and without protective mats. These children were most likely to sustain injuries of the upper-extremities because gymnasts “are not taught to fall in a manner that diffuses the impact of the fall across as much of the body surface as possible. Individuals have a tendency to stiffen up and brace themselves with their arms during a fall.” Nearly half of the ER visits were for strains and sprains, and a third of the visits were due to fractures and dislocations. Concussions were the least common cause of trips to the ER — less than 2 percent.

Fortunately, most of the injuries were not serious and did not require hospitalization.

Keep your gymnast tumbling safely. Gymnastics is a great sport that offers kids physical fitness and agility. By taking the proper safety measures, you can keep your child safe as she participates:

- Prepare well. Get your child the proper training in the sport. Make sure she knows and understands the rules and that she is properly matched for the sport according to skill level, size, and physical and emotional maturity.
- Teach him how to fall. Ask the coach to show your child how to properly fall in order to prevent injury.
- Gear up. Provide your child with the right protective gear, and talk to coaches about any equipment needed for the sport.



- Practice safely. Never allow your child to practice without a mat or a spotter.
- Keep an eye on them. Always make sure your child is under the supervision of a trained adult.
- Know when to stop. Pushing herself too far, or allowing a coach to push her too far, can increase the risk of injury.
- Don't let your child participate when injured, or when still recovering from an injury, because athletes are at greater risk for being reinjured when they return to the sport before a previous injury has had time to heal.

CASES OF RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESSES ARE ON THE RISE

Swimming pools, lakes and rivers - they are often part of summer fun, but bacteria in these bodies of water can take a toll on health. More outbreaks of recreational water illnesses were reported in 2007 than ever before, and the numbers could increase in the coming years. Recreational water illnesses are spread by swallowing, breathing, or having contact with germs in the water of swimming pools, spas, lakes, rivers or oceans. The leading cause of recreational water illness is *Cryptosporidium*, a parasite resistant to chlorine that is primarily associated with treated swimming places, such as pools and water parks. Because *Crypto* is chlorine resistant, even a well-maintained pool can be a culprit. Help keep everyone healthy and stop the spread of water-borne illnesses by taking the following steps when possible:

- Do not allow your child in water if he or she has diarrhea
 - Have your child take a shower before swimming
 - Make sure your child wash his or her hands after using the bathroom and before getting back into the water
 - Make sure to wash your hands well after changing diapers, and clean the bottom of the child in diapers thoroughly with soap and water before he or she re-enters the water
- If a recreational water illness does get transmitted, symptoms generally begin two to 10 days (average seven days) after becoming infected with the parasite.

SUMMER JOBS (and jobs at other times too)

The last school bell hasn't even rung for the year, but already millions of teens across the country are lining up

their summer jobs. About 6 million young people ages 16 through 19 have jobs every summer. Among the jobs they take are in landscaping, construction, food preparation, retail sales and offices.

Summer employment is great for teens. It teaches responsibility, financial management techniques and valuable employment skills, along with helping them to save for college. However, parents should take an active part in making sure your teen's job is safe. According to studies, many teen jobs are risky and violate federal child labor laws with long shifts, dangerous equipment, and little supervision.

One study found that despite federal regulations prohibiting teens under 18 from using certain types of dangerous equipment and from serving or selling alcohol, more than half of females and about 40 percent of males reported having performed at least one prohibited task. In some cases, the teens worked without adult supervision, worked alone after dark, and worked more hours per week than child labor laws allow.

The agriculture industry is the most dangerous because of the nature of the work and the machinery used.

The retail industry is the second most hazardous because of robberies and assaults, as well as equipment used, especially in restaurants.

What to do before your teen accepts a job

Before your teen accepts a job, make sure the environment is safe by learning the federal and state child labor laws and determining if prospective employers are in compliance.

You'll also want to find out:

-The specific job responsibilities.

Make sure your teen can legally and physically handle the responsibilities.

- What sort of training your child will receive. Make sure your child is properly trained to handle the job, and that he will not be asked to do any other job without further training.

- Who will be supervising your child and if that person is capable of handling emergencies.

- What safety measures have been taken to protect your child. Will she be working alone after hours? Is there

a security system in the establishment? Is there easy access to an alarm or phone for a 911 call?

- How many hours your child will work, and when.

For more detailed information on specific jobs and safety considerations, visit OSHA's website at:

[http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/su
mmerjobs/](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/su
mmerjobs/)