

KEEPING CHEERLEADING SAFE

While cheerleading once was considered a student activity related to spirit raising, nowadays it falls under many institution's athletic programs thanks to its popularity and athleticism. As with any other athlete, cheerleaders face injury concerns, especially musculoskeletal injuries and those related to overuse since the cheer season tends to be year-round.

KEYS TO CHEER SAFETY

- **Skills Progression:** Skills progression is fundamental to cheerleading and starts with body positions and proper landing techniques. Cheerleaders must demonstrate skills on the ground before they take to the air.
- **Coach Certification:** U.S. All Star Federation, the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators and the National Federation of State High School Associations all offer coach certification and credentialing programs, ensuring coaches have the necessary knowledge to keep cheerleaders safe.
- **Rules and Regulations:** Governing bodies such as USA Cheer and AACCA constantly review rules and regulations, making adjustments to reduce the risk of catastrophic injuries. Examples include:
 - Skills restrictions, such as the removal of double twisting dismounts
 - Surface restrictions
 - Requiring additional spotters
- **Access to Medical Care:** Just like other sports, when cheerleaders have access to proper medical care and professionals, such as an athletic trainer, there is a reduction in injury.

DID YOU KNOW?

- USA Cheer is the governing body of cheerleading, representing all forms of cheerleading in the United States – school, college and all star (non-school, club cheerleading).
- Approximately 400,000 students participate in high school cheerleading annually, with 123,386 involved in competitive spirit squads.
- According to a National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study, injury rates in cheerleading rank 18th out of 22 sports, with an overall injury rate of 0.71 injuries per 1,000 athlete-exposures.
- In 2014, there were fewer emergency room visits for girls ages 14 to 18 for cheerleading (21,831) than girls' basketball (47,113), soccer (37,193) and softball (27,940).
- More spirit coaches than any other coaches have taken the AACCA certification course. Currently, 20,000 coaches have completed the AACCA Spirit Safety Certification course with nearly 5,000 coaches completing the course in 2015.

Sources: CheerSafe, National Federation of State High School Associations, National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study
Infographic provided by the National Athletic Trainers' Association

