



# Allergy Safety

The start of a new season can be the start of many new relationships. September brings in a large number of new members to clubs. It is important to understand them to ensure that you can guarantee their safety. A prevalent risk nowadays is **ALLERGIES**. Here are a few tips on how to prepare:

## Always ask:

A good motto to have is to “**always ask**”. In most cases, parents that have children with allergies will let you know. But assuming this sets your club up for risk. Be sure to ask and make note of any allergies.

This note should be on:

- Main registration forms (kept in the main office)
- Coach participant list (keep coach informed)

Also ensure that the parents provide you with the following:

- Explanation of medical alert bracelet
- Allergy aid kit – (prescription medicine or epi pen)
- Emergency contact number (i.e. cell phone number)

## Be Prepared:

Even with the most extensive planning, unexpected situations arise. It is very important that you have a plan in place to deal with an allergic reaction.

Allergies that can arise in the gym:

- Food allergy
- Bee sting allergy (especially when doors are open)
- Sun allergy
- Mold allergy
- Pet allergies (pet hair on clothing of other participants)

Be sure to recognize that mild reactions can result in rashes, itchy watery eyes and congestion. While moderate reactions add itchiness and difficulty breathing.

NOTE: One of the most common types of allergies is food related. It is said that about 7 out of 100 kids have a food allergy.

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# Birthday Party Safety

Including birthday parties in your gymnastics business might seem like a great way to add income to your business and draw new students into your gymnastics programs. However, there are things to consider when inviting visitors into your facility. Guests, both children and adults, who aren't familiar with gymnastics facilities, can easily be injured during parties held on your premises.

Most of these incidents can be avoided with proper instruction and warning signs. We recommend you take the following steps to reduce the risk of a claim at your gym club.

## Always!

- Leave manufacturers' warning labels on all equipment.
- Post signage next to equipment indicating rules for usage and maximum height or weight limitations, including all manufacturers' recommendations.
- Keep non-participants and observers in a designated area separate from the activity area.
- Train monitors, coaches and assistants to know, understand and enforce all equipment and house rules and regulations.

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## Don't forget!

- Provide information to the person(s) booking the event explaining rules/risks and responsibilities for the host and guests.
- Make a verbal presentation once the guests arrive, addressing rules and risks.
- Prohibit access to areas and equipment not being used for the event, such as trampolines and climbing walls, using physical barriers and additional signs.
- Provide adequate staffing levels to monitor the activities of all guests – including adult observers that may accompany children participating in the event.
- Do not allow unsupervised use of trampolines or other equipment
- Closely monitor area around floor-level trampolines to ensure that participants and guests are aware of the possible trip and fall hazard.





# Bullying

Whether you're a parent, coach or a participant, understanding how to handle bullying is an important topic. In gyms, this issue has become a growing concern. Here are some tips on to prevent bullying to ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for all.

## Parent

### What you can do:

- Recognize that you are a role model and be sure to set a good example to your child, as well as other participants and parents.
- Establish open communication with your child and their coach.
- Try to be present for sessions whenever possible. If you observe something, bring it to the attention of the coach at the conclusion of the session.
- After sessions, ask the participant about how it went. If they seem like they didn't enjoy it – ask them why?

## Coach

### What you can do:

- Understand that you are a role model. Set a good example and emphasize good behaviour.
- Be aware of your responsibility to deal with these issues when they arise. Ignoring the behaviour is seen as accepting the behaviour.
- Encourage the victim to not react back at the bully and to walk away from the situation. Having them react will just encourage.
- Have open communication with participants and parents. Remind them to notify you if this kind of behaviour occurs.
- If behaviour is a reoccurring problem – contact your supervisor for additional assistance.

## Participant

### If the bullying is happening to you:

- Remember it is your right to be treated respectfully. Never ignore disrespectful behaviour.
- Trust your gut feeling. If the way someone is treating is making you uncomfortable, make sure you tell your coach and parents.
- Always remember to stay calm. Reacting to the bullying will only encourage them.
- Don't be afraid. Keep your head up and stand up straight. Bullies like when people are afraid.

### If you see someone being bullied:

- Help the victim by stating this behaviour is inappropriate and go to find help. Never ignore it.

Check out Kids Help Phone website for more information on bullying: <http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/en/informed/bullying/default.asp>



# Concussion Safety

It's better to miss one training session than the entire season. This is an important concept to remember when an athlete is deciding to come back to gymnastics after suffering a concussion. It is important to know all that you can about the signs, symptoms and recovery process of concussions.

Below are two excellent resources that can help:

## SCAT Card

SCAT stands for Sport Concussion Assessment Tool. It is a two page document that outlines the steps that must be taken when medically evaluating an athlete that may have suffered a concussion.

It includes the following:

- Definition
- Signs Assessment/Memory Test
- Cognitive Assessment/Neurologic Screening
- Post Concussion Symptoms
- Return to Play Information

You can find it by clicking on this link:

[http://www.ogf.com/cms/content\\_list.php?content\\_category\\_id=836](http://www.ogf.com/cms/content_list.php?content_category_id=836)

## Heads Up

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released the "Heads Up" program in response to the growing number of sport-related traumatic brain injuries that occur yearly. They offer a tool kit that includes materials to help educate:

- Coaches
- Athletes
- Parents, and
- Club staff

You can log on to their website to download or order the resources that they have available.

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussioninyouthsports>

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# Dog Safety

**Preventing Dog Bites:** Maybe you love them and want to pet every one you see. Or maybe you're afraid of them and want to move to a dog-free neighbourhood. Either way, dogs are a part of life. Millions of people have dogs as pets. You'll see them all over town, in the city, country, and even when you're on vacation. They come in all shapes, sizes, and personalities — a lot like kids!

## Wagging Tails

A dog that wags its tail – swishing it back and forth – is often thought to be friendly.

But it is not a sign of how friendly or un-friendly a dog is. A dog who wags its tail could be a biter.

Follow your dog manners and ask the owner before petting it.

No one wants a dog bite, but how do you prevent one?

## Dog Manners

You should follow certain rules when you meet or spend time with dogs — especially ones you don't know.

If you meet someone new, maybe your mom or dad showed you how to shake hands and say, "Nice to meet you." Well, you can also have some equally good dog manners. That means taking certain steps every time you meet a dog or spend time with one. Dogs will love that you're so polite and, best of all, they will be less likely to bite you!

## DOG SAFE

**D:** Don't Tease, Please

**O:** Only Pet With Permission

**G:** Give Space

**S:** Slow Down

**A:** Always Get Help

**F:** Fingers Together

**E:** Even Good Dogs Can Bite

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# Event Safety

It is extremely important to recognize that the safety risks increase dramatically when you run a public event at your club. Here are a few key areas of concern and some tips on how to manage them:

## Flash Photography

Flash photography is a great risk to the participants. The flash can create a distraction to the athlete. They could lose their focus and put themselves in great danger.

Try suggesting these options:

- Permit camera's without a flash
- Set-up a photo opportunity by offering a designated spot for spectators to take a photo (outside the gym area)
- Have a professional photographer come in and offer competition pictures for purchase



## Eager Spectators

It is important to put up proper signage letting spectators know where they have access to and where they are not allowed. Having a spectator walk out on to the floor is an important risk management issue to be aware of.

Try a few of these suggestions:

- Create designated areas for: athletes, coaches and judges
- Put up LARGE & COLOURFUL signs for these areas
- Inform spectators of designated areas as they are admitted into the gym



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# Flu Safety

It is flu season and it seems that germs are everywhere! The best means of avoiding the flu (other than the flu shot) is to practice proper hand washing techniques. Please follow the steps below:



1. Wet hands with warm running water.
2. Apply soap and rub your hands together. Do this for at least 20 seconds; be careful not to wash the lather away! Wash the front and back of your hands. Don't forget between your fingers and under your nails!
3. Rinse your hands well under warm running water.
4. Pat hands dry with a paper towel.
5. Turn off water using same paper towel.
6. Throw the paper towel in the garbage.

**Check out more hand washing techniques at:**

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/pubhealth/handwashing/handwashing\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/pubhealth/handwashing/handwashing_mn.html)

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# Germ Control

When parents send their children to gymnastics, they understand that physical activity is an essential part in achieving and maintaining good health. Another consideration to protecting their child's health is germ control. While at gym the importance of good germ control practices should be encouraged to complement the physical activity. Here are a few suggestions of how to encourage good germ control practices within the club:

## Personalize

"What's mine is yours". Since we were young we have always been encouraged to share but there are a few things that are exceptions to this rule.

Encourage parents to send their children with water and snacks that are "personalized". Have the child's name on the bottle or snack (packaging). This helps avoid children mistaking an item for their own (keeping their germs to themselves).

Also suggest that parents do not encourage "drink sharing". A lot of germs are transferred by this means.

## Wipe it up

In an environment like the gym, it is well known that the participants are going to sweat. That sweat can travel onto the equipment.

So, like the workout rooms do, it is good idea to create a schedule for cleaning off the equipment. If you have a cleaning company, explain the importance of this and set up a schedule for cleaning.

If there is no cleaning crew, divide up the responsibility and devise a schedule that works for those involved.

Yoga mats are very absorbent! They can easily hold on to infection causing bacteria. If you use these in your gym, please wash them regularly!



# Gym Safety

Providing direction can help participants stay on track and out of the line of danger. Planned walkways in the gym are an excellent way to provide participants safe routes around the gym. The most important planned walkway would be directing them to an emergency exit.

## First Reaction

Everyone's first reaction to an emergency is to lose control. They usually move as fast as possible to get out of the way of danger.

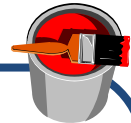
During times like this it is important to have clearly marked routes that can direct them to safety.

## Walk this way

Planned walkways directing them to emergency exits can save lives.

Pre-planning routes do the thinking for participants. They trust that following this path will get them to safety in the quickest time possible.

## Follow the red



A good way to create the pathway would be to paint the floor red or line it with red mats. The red is a bright recognizable colour that can be seen quickly.

If there is a fire and smoke spreads quickly, everyone in the gym will be able to get low and follow the red.

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# Healthy Eating

You compete how you eat! It is a fact that what you eat and drink has a direct impact on how well you perform. If athlete's neglect to monitor their eating habits, their athletic performance will be affected. Improper nutrition lowers energy levels and makes athletes less alert. This situation can commonly translate into the opportunity for injury.

## Before Gymnastics

Beforehand, the athlete should have a meal or snack that is:

- High in carbohydrates to maximize energy levels.
- Moderate in protein to ensure the athlete feels full but not too full.
- A sufficient source of liquids to ensure the athlete is well hydrated.

**TIP:** Avoid trying new foods/meals right before a class/training session. Test it out another day to make sure the athlete can tolerate it.

## During Gymnastics

During the class/training session, the main goal of the snack is to replenish liquids and energy levels. Therefore the snack must be:

- High in carbohydrates  
&
- A sufficient source of fluids

**Tip:** Good sources of carbohydrates are foods such as pasta, rice, whole grain bread or bagels, fruits & vegetables.

## After Gymnastics

After the class/training session, make sure your snack is:

- High in carbohydrates
- A sufficient source of liquids
- High in protein to repair muscles tissues after exercise.

**Tip:** Good sources of protein are foods such as meat, fish, poultry, milk, cheese, and eggs.

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# Heat Safety

When the dog days of summer deliver hot temperatures and high humidity gymnastics camp staff need to take precautions against the heat. Everyone is at risk when temperatures rise above 90 degrees, but children are most susceptible to heat and heat-related illnesses. Being aware of the signs and symptoms of heat illness can greatly reduce the risks and save a life.

## Prevention

### What you can do:

- The best way to avoid it is to take care to avoid the heat as much as possible especially when the heat index is above 90 degrees.
- Dress for the heat. Wear lightweight, light-coloured clothing, wear a hat or use an umbrella. Don't forget sunscreen.
- Make sure children drink plenty of fluids in the heat, whether thirsty or not.
- Have them take cooling off breaks throughout the day in an air-conditioned environment.
- Eat small meals more often.
- Postpone outdoor games and recreation.

## Heat Related Terms

### Know what they mean:

- Heat cramps: muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. They are an early signal that the body is having trouble with the heat.
- Heat exhaustion: Typically occurs when children exercise heavily where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Signals include cool, moist, red skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea; exhaustion.
- Heat stroke: is life threatening. The victim's temperature control system stops working. Signals include hot, red, dry skin; rapid weak pulse; shallow breathing. Body temperature can reach 105°

## Treatment

### General care:

- Heat cramps or heat exhaustion: get the child to a cool environment and comfortable. Have them drink water. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply a cool wet towel. Call 9-1-1 if the child refuses water, vomits, or loses consciousness.
- Heat stroke: Heat stroke is life threatening! Call 9-1-1. Remove the child to a cool environment. Quickly cool the body. Immerse in a cool bath or cover with cool sheets. Keep them lying down and continue to cool. Monitor the body temperature and continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to 101°-102°.

Enjoy the summer but beware of the heat.



# Ice and Snow Safety

As the winter season gets into full swing, it is important for your club to consider how they can protect their members from ice and snow accidents. Many injuries occur by simply walking from your car to the gym door. Consider the following to ensure safety for all of your members:



## Snow Removal

- It is your responsibility to clear walkways of snow.
- If the weather is calling for several inches, go out periodically to ensure that snow does not build up.
- If a lot fell over night, work at it inch by inch. Remember it is important to stay safe while shoveling \*Do not do more than you can handle\*



## Salting Walkways

- It is suggested that you salt your walkways before, during and after snow falls.
- Salting prevents the formation of ice.
- Ice on walkways is a major risk to you, your athletes, and their parents. Make sure this is a priority because it is a major insurance risk for your club.



## Clearing Debris

- Keep up on the weather. Before an expected snow storm, make sure you clear the walkways from debris.
- If anything is left in the path, after a snow storm it will be covered with snow creating a potential tripping hazard.

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# Stay Hydrated

Water is an essential component in sports performance. When minimal, dehydration can occur. It is very important to monitor water intake and understand how much is needed at different times.

## BEFORE EXERCISE

It is recommended that an average person needs approximately 500 to 1000mLs of water within the two hours before the class.

This amount of water will ensure that they are adequately hydrated going into the class.

## DURING EXERCISE

Regular drink intervals are very important during the class. (no less than every 10-15 minutes)

The rate of water consumption should be comparable to the intensity of the class and the amount of fluid loss through sweat.

## AFTER EXERCISE

Fluids must be replaced once the class is over.

It is suggested that drinks containing carbohydrates and electrolytes (sodium & potassium) are useful in recovery.

Be sure to encourage adequate rehydration!

### What not to drink:

Pop (like Coke), lemonade, fruit drinks, coffee, and tea

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# Storm Safety

Whether you like them or not, you definitely want to be safe inside when a thunderstorm blows through the neighbourhood.

## Understand

Storms show nature at its most amazing. Lightning is an electric current. Within a thundercloud way up in the sky, many small bits of ice (frozen raindrops) bump into each other as they move around in the air. All of those collisions create an electric charge. After a while, the whole cloud fills up with electrical charges. The ground's electrical charge concentrates around anything that sticks up, such as mountains, people, or single trees. The charge coming up from these points eventually connects with a charge reaching down from the clouds and - zap - lightning strikes! It's not true that lightning never strikes the same place twice. The Empire State Building in New York has been struck as frequently as 15 times in 15 minutes.

## Stay Safe

No matter how much you know about the science of storms, you still need to be safe inside when one is happening. Even more important you don't want to get struck by lightning. Lightning strikes – where someone gets hurt – are rare. The good news is that you can learn rules to follow that keep you safe when lightning is flashing:

- Get out of the pool, lake, or ocean. Water conducts electricity.
- Seek shelter in a house or building.
- If you are outside and can't get inside, don't stand under or near large objects. Lightning is more likely to hit something tall.
- Plan ahead. Be aware of the weather forecast when you'll be outdoors.

## Finding Calm

When you're nice and snug indoors, you have a front-row seat to quite a show. Watch the wind bend the trees around and the leaves swirl through the air. And all that lightning and thunder can be better than fireworks.

You also can do some easy math to figure out how far away the lightning strikes are. Watch for the flash, then start counting the seconds that pass until you hear the thunder. Divide that number by 5 and you'll have the approximate distance in miles. This can be helpful because you can follow the progress of the storm as it clears out of your area.

Keep your campers safe while playing outdoors!



# West Nile Safety

As the temperature increases, gymnastics clubs are always looking for ways to cool the gym and the gymnasts. Gym doors get propped open; classes are taken outside and so on. When this happens, it is important to remember the risks that lurk. West Nile virus is a prevalent concern nowadays and gyms should consider the following tips to secure the safety of the participants:

## Prevention

Eliminating mosquito breeding grounds is the most effective means of reducing your risk. Mosquito's lay eggs in standing water, therefore it is important to ensure your facility removes all standing water.

Consider the following:

- Draining water under flower pots
- Removing water from garbage cans and recycling bins
- Cleaning out eavestroughs
- Changing the water in bird baths, pet bowls or wading pools

## Protection

If you have your participants going outside, make it a good practice to have them do the following:

- Apply insect repellent (contain DEET or other approved ingredients)
- Wear light coloured clothing (mosquitoes are attracted to dark colours)
- Be dressed in protective clothing such as long sleeves, long pants and a hat.



**BE QUICK** – It takes about 4 days for eggs to grow into adults that are ready to fly.  
**SO CHECK FOR STANDING WATER REGULARLY!**

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