

1st US study -- gymnastics lands thousands in ER

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More than 600,000 children participate in school-sponsored and club-level gymnastics competitions annually in the United States. Yet gymnastics continues to be overlooked in terms of potential for injury, while having one of the highest injury rates of all girls' sports.

A study, conducted by researchers in the Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) at The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital and published in the April electronic issue of Pediatrics, examined data on children 6 to 17 years of age who were treated in hospital emergency departments for gymnastics-related injuries between 1990 and 2005. According to the findings, on average nearly 27,000 injuries are reported each year – nearly 426,000 injuries during the 16-year period.

“Many parents do not typically think of gymnastics as a dangerous sport,” said study senior author Lara McKenzie, PhD, MA, principal investigator in CIRP at Nationwide Children's Hospital. “In fact, many parents consider it an activity. Yet gymnastics has the same clinical incidence of catastrophic injuries as ice hockey.”

The majority of the gymnastics injuries - 40 percent - occurred at school or a place of recreation/sports. Girls were more likely than boys to sustain upper extremity injuries, while head and neck injuries were more common in boys.

Fractures and dislocations were most common for children 6 to 11 years

of age, and strains and sprains were more frequent in the 12 to 17 age group.

“Our study suggests prevention and reduction of gymnastics injuries may be achieved by the establishment and universal enforcement of rules and regulations for gymnasts, coaches and spotters,” said McKenzie, also an assistant professor at The Ohio State University College of Medicine.

Source: Nationwide Children's Hospital

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