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# AAP News


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## AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

### S is for safety in cheerleading!

Cheerleading is an increasingly popular activity for children of all ages, but the number and severity of cheerleading injuries such as concussions also are growing. The American Academy of Pediatrics has released new recommendations to help prevent these injuries.

- Cheerleading should be sanctioned as a sport so that it is subject to the rules and regulations of sports governing bodies and school athletic departments.
  - Coaches should be trained in gymnastics and stunt spotting, safety measures, and basic injury management.
  - Cheerleaders should receive a preparticipation sports physical, training in correct spotting techniques, and access to strength and conditioning.
  - Cheerleaders should attempt stunts only after they show they are able to perform them safely.
  - Spotters and bases should have adequate upper body and core strength.
  - Stunts should be performed only on spring floors, mats, foam floors or grass, as hard surfaces increase the risk for injury.
  - Pyramids should be limited to no more than two people high.
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- Coaches, parents and cheerleaders should have access to a written emergency plan such as the one found on the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches & Administrators web page at [www.aacca.org/content.aspx?item=Resources/EmergencyPlan.xml](http://www.aacca.org/content.aspx?item=Resources/EmergencyPlan.xml).
  - A cheerleader showing signs of a head injury should be removed from practice or competition and allowed to return only after receiving written permission from a physician.
- Parents are encouraged to ask coaches about their experience, training and ability to recognize and manage injuries, as well as where practices will be held.

— Lori O'Keefe

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