

Catholic Mutual...CARES

CHEERLEADING GUIDELINES

This activity has dramatically evolved from when it originated in the late 1800's. Cheerleading today can range from simply leading fans in cheers to competitive acrobatic stunts and gymnastic style tumbling.

It should be no surprise that injuries have steadily increased. What should be surprising is that over the past 25 years, cheerleading accounts for roughly 66% of all catastrophic injuries for high school girls participating in any sports type program.

What Are The Main Factors Responsible

- Cheerleading on harder surfaces.
- Performing Stunts.
- Inadequate training and experience of coaches.
- A trend towards girls participating at younger and younger ages.

WHAT DOES CATHOLIC MUTUAL RECOMMEND?

- First and foremost, determine what policy is in effect for your Arch/Diocese.
- Regardless of national, state association or public school allowances, tumbling, pyramid and any off the ground stunts should only be performed at the high school level. Note: Pyramids cause the majority of head and neck injuries.
- If your cheerleading program allows any stunts and/or tumbling, coaches need to adhere to all rules in the latest National Federation of High School (NFHS) *Spirit Rules Handbook* and the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators (AACCA) *High School Cheerleading Safety Rules*. The handbook and respective manual can be obtained at www.nfhs.com and AACCA.org.
- Coaches must also undergo training and be certified in spotting, partner stunts, safety measures and basic injury management to include concussion protocols.
- Technical stunts such as pyramids, mounts, tosses and tumbling should only be performed on padded surfaces.
- All cheerleading participants need to be properly trained and demonstrate the necessary skills, proficiency and strength before performing live technical skill activities.
- Cheer competitions need to be held at locations that meet the requirements of the National Safety Foundation and the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators (AACCA).
- An additional resource which contains extensive information regarding cheerleading is the American Academy of Pediatrics www.aap.org.