KEEPING CHEERLEADERS SAFE

Once viewed as a student spirit activity, cheerleading now forms part of many athletic programs due to its popularity and athleticism. As with other athletes, cheerleaders face injury risks, especially musculoskeletal and overuse injuries, because the cheer season often continues year-round.

CHEER SAFETY ESSENTIALS

- **Skill Progression:** Start with body positions and safe landing technique, key foundations of cheerleading. Athletes must show their skills on the ground before performing them in the air.
- **Coach Credentials:** U.S. All Star Federation, the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators and the National Federation of State High School Associations offer certification and credentials to ensure coaches have the knowledge needed to keep cheerleaders safe.
- **Rules:** Bodies such as USA Cheer and AACCA regularly review and revise rules to lower the chance of catastrophic injury. Examples are:
  - Limits on skills, such as removing double twisting dismounts
  - Restrictions on surfaces
  - Extra spotters
- **Medical Access:** As in other sports, proper medical care from professionals such as athletic trainers helps reduce cheerleading injuries.

QUICK FACTS

- USA Cheer governs cheerleading in the U.S., representing every form: school, college and all star cheerleading - nonschool, club-based teams.
- About 400,000 students cheer in high school each year; 123,386 participate in competitive spirit squads.
- A National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study ranked cheer 18th of 22 sports for injuries, with 0.71 injuries per 1,000 athlete-exposures overall.
- In 2014, girls ages 14 to 18 had fewer ER visits for cheer (21,831) than basketball (47,113), soccer (37,193) or softball (27,940).
- More spirit coaches have taken AACCA certification than coaches in any other sport. The AACCA Spirit Safety Certification course has 20,000 graduates, including nearly 5,000 coaches who completed it in 2015.



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