

## **Risk Assessment for Participation on Gymnastics.**

This risk assessment applies to participation in gymnastics at recreational (general) and squad competitive level, unless stated otherwise herein.

Alton Gymnastics Club run classes and training sessions at Alton Sports Centre, Chawton Park Road, Alton Hampshire. The training sessions and classes are run either on badminton courts 5 and 6 or badminton courts 1,3 or badminton courts 1,3 and 5 in the main hall of this multi-sports facility.

The equipment is laid out in one of 3 arrangements, depending on which badminton courts are being used. The equipment is rigged and de-rigged every session, so equipment is checked regularly for wear and damage each session, the equipment is checked to ensure it is correctly and safely erected. Documented equipment checks are carried out regularly with any defects being rectified within a reasonable timeframe. Equipment deemed unsafe for use is taken out of use until it is repaired to full working order. Although the Staff at the sports Centre bring the equipment out of the cupboard and place it in the hall, it is the job and responsibility of the Club Coaches to erect and make safe the various items of equipment before it is used. Club Coaches know and understand the correct set up of equipment and are aware of the inherent dangers of faulty equipment or set ups. The risk of injury caused by faulty equipment is therefore minimised to almost none by this process.

Recreational gymnastics is not considered to pose a particular risk, except in the case that the gymnasts are unsupervised. Alton Gymnastics Club maintain a sensible coach to gymnast ratio and this ratio is less in terms of gymnasts for younger children.

Gymnasts are not allowed to use the equipment if a qualified coach does not supervise them. If this rule is broken, the club reserve the right to exclude the gymnast from training. This rule is consistently re-enforced and made known to all gymnasts throughout all sessions.

Older recreational gymnasts and those who are involved in competitive training are at certain risk when they start performing inverted skills such as backflips, somersaults and dismounts from the beam and bars. These skills are first learnt using foam safety mats that are at least 30cm thick with adequate landing matting beneath and with coach support. The coach must make the decision about when it is considered safe for the gymnast to attempt the move without assistance. At this stage, it is more likely for gymnasts to make a mistake and for this reason, adequate matting should continue to be used.

Risks associated with participation in gymnastics and the measures taken in the prevention/minimisation of these risks are described below.

**Risk: Breaks, Minor or Major sprains to joints from landing badly.**

**Prevention / minimisation:**

- Gymnasts are taught the correct landing technique from the very earliest stage of training.
- Adequate matting is used.
- Gymnasts are adequately warmed up each session.

# **Alton Gymnastics Club**

RiskassessAGC.001

- Gymnasts are taken through the correct progressions and can perform the pre-requisite skills prior to performing the skill being learned.
- Gymnasts are supported where necessary and until it is considered safe for the gymnast to attempt the skill without assistance.
- Gymnasts are spotted on all landings from somersaults and somersault dismounts on any apparatus until completely comfortable unaided.
- Gymnasts are supervised when using the equipment.
- Gymnasts are made aware of the dangers and how best to avoid them.
- Gymnasts must not practice skills that carry risk when they are too tired or when they are unwell or injured in any way.

These measures serve to minimise the risk of breaks and bad sprains to joints from landing badly but they cannot remove the risk altogether.

**Risk:** Broken bones from falls from apparatus, such as to the wrists or arms.

**Prevention / minimisation:**

- Gymnasts are taught safe falling technique from the earliest stage of training.
- Adequate matting is used.
- Gymnasts do not use a piece of apparatus that is considered too high for their ability or relative height.
- Gymnasts are taken through the correct progressions and can perform the pre-requisite skills prior to performing the skill being learned.
- Gymnasts are supported where necessary and until it is considered safe for the gymnast to attempt the skill without assistance.
- Gymnasts are spotted on all landing from somersaults and somersault dismounts on any apparatus.
- Gymnasts are supervised when using the equipment.
- Gymnasts are made aware of the dangers.
- Gymnasts must not practice skills that carry risk when they are too tired or when they are unwell or injured in any way.

These measures serve to minimise the risk of broken bones from falls from apparatus but they cannot remove the risk altogether.

**Risk:** Broken neck or back.

- In rare cases there is always the danger of a broken neck or back but this would normally only happen as a result of a somersault going badly wrong. . The gymnast losing special orientation or scaring (bailing) out of a move can cause a somersault to go wrong. The latter is most dangerous and most difficult to anticipate.
- It is very unlikely that recreational gymnasts would ever be performing a skill with the speed and height to create sufficient impact forces to do such damage.
- Squad gymnasts as they advance are required to perform much harder and more dangerous skills.

**Prevention/Minimisation:**

- Recreational gymnasts are closely spotted during somersaults as their abilities justify close attention.
- All coaches involved in coaching somersaulting skills should have a full understanding of the inherent dangers to their gymnasts.

# **Alton Gymnastics Club**

RiskassessAGC.001

- Coaches must only work within their level of qualification unless supervised by a more senior coach who is qualified to the level of the skill being practiced.
- If a coach feels that he or she requires assistance, even though qualified to the level of the skill that is being practised, he or she must seek help.
- Coaches and gymnasts must not attempt anything that they are not comfortable with.
- Adequate matting is used.
- Gymnasts are taken through the correct progressions and can perform the pre-requisite skills prior to performing the skill being learned.
- Gymnasts are supported where necessary and until it is considered safe for the gymnast to attempt the skill without assistance.
- Gymnasts are spotted on all landing from somersaults and somersault dismounts on any apparatus.
- Gymnasts are supervised when using the equipment.
- Gymnasts are made aware of the dangers.
- Gymnasts must not practice skills that carry risk when they are too tired or when they are unwell or injured in any way.

These measures serve to minimise the already small risk of broken neck or back from in gymnastics but they cannot remove the risk altogether.

**Risk:** General risk of injury including bruises, muscle strains, bad sprains, ligament damage and minor or major fractures due to element performance 'going wrong'.

- The risk of injury in gymnastics cannot be entirely removed.
- Most injuries occur due to poor landings. Injuries more particularly occur during element performances that go wrong. The gymnast losing special orientation or scaring (bailing) out of a move can often cause an element performance to go wrong. The latter is most dangerous and most difficult to anticipate.
- The risk of severe injury due to element performances 'going wrong' is very small in recreational gymnastics as the level of skills that are taught mean that it is very unlikely that recreational gymnasts would ever be performing a skill with the speed and height to create sufficient impact forces to result in severe damage.
- Squad gymnasts as they advance are required to perform much harder and more dangerous skills.

## **Prevention/Minimisation:**

- Gymnasts are taken through the correct progressions and can perform the pre-requisite skills prior to performing the skill being learned.
- Adequate matting is used.
- A large amount of repetition of the skill is done with assistance or spotting before the gymnast is allowed to attempt it unaided.
- The gymnast must consistently show appropriate technique and confidence performing the element with assistance or spotting before attempting the element unaided.
- All coaches involved in coaching somersaulting skills should have a full understanding of the inherent dangers to their gymnasts.
- Coaches must only work within their level of qualification unless supervised by a more senior coach who is qualified to the level of the skill being practiced.
- If a coach feels that he or she requires assistance, even though qualified to the level of the skill that is being practised, he or she must seek help.

# **Alton Gymnastics Club**

RiskassessAGC.001

- Coaches and gymnasts must not attempt anything that they are not comfortable with.
- Gymnasts learning double somersaults are taught the progressions and then taken to another facility where they can practice the whole skill into a foam pit before they are allowed to perform the skill at the Alton Gymnastics Club.
- Gymnasts are supervised when using the equipment.
- Gymnasts are made aware of the dangers.
- Gymnasts must not practice skills that carry risk when they are too tired or when they are unwell or injured in any way.
- Gymnasts returning to training after time off for any reason are re-introduced gradually, building up slowly and ensuring that fitness is regained before performing at the level at which they were previously working.

These measures serve to minimise the general risk of injury due to element performances 'going wrong' but they cannot remove the risk altogether.

## **Risk:**

### Overuse Injuries.

- All gymnasts can suffer overuse injuries, particularly prior to competitions. These are rarely serious but they do need time to heal.
- Overuse injuries can affect any part of the anatomy, but in girls and general gymnastics they most commonly occur in the lower extremities, like the knees, and ankles.

### **Prevention/Minimisation**

- Gymnasts are adequately warmed up each session.
- Gymnasts must show that they have the strength, flexibility and fitness to perform the skill being learned.
- On recreational classes, the basic strengthening of vulnerable parts of the body is applied through the work on the Awards Schemes and other simple exercises that are performed as part of the warm up or during apparatus work. Overuse injuries are uncommon in recreational gymnastics because of the small amount of time that the gymnasts spend in the gym. However, these can affect their performance if they have been sustained as a result of other activities in which the gymnast participates more regularly.
- For those gymnasts participating for more than one hour per week, a conditioning program is followed as appropriate to the level and number of training hours of the gymnast. In particular, Lower Body workouts serve to strengthen the vulnerable parts of the body including stabilising joints by strengthening the muscle frameworks that support these joints. The program also includes exercises that promote gentle stretching of the muscles that are connected to the joints in order to maintain flexibility and full mobility as appropriate to gymnastics activity.
- Gymnasts are made aware of the dangers and the possible consequences of not regularly doing their conditioning and preparation properly.
- Gymnasts must build up their fitness through low-risk conditioning and preparation exercises in order to prepare their body for the demands that gymnastics will make upon it.
- Any discomfort reported by a gymnast during an activity is investigated and monitored accordingly. The activity may be ceased until the discomfort is resolved.

# **Alton Gymnastics Club**

RiskassessAGC.001

- Adequate matting is used and forgiving surfaces are used where appropriate, particularly when a great amount of repetition is required.
- Gymnasts are constantly reminded of the importance of correct landing techniques.
- Gymnasts must not continue training elements, and in particular new elements when they are becoming fatigued. Coaches are aware of and understand the risks of training when tired and must recognise this before performance becomes impaired as such to present an additional risk of injury.

**Risk:** Permanent injury, minor or major.

- Due to the speed of rotation, kinetic speed and height, any squad gymnast has the potential to be severely injured. There is always the danger of permanent injury.
- The types of injury that might be permanent are those to the neck and back that consequently affect the spinal chord. Another type of injury that could result in permanent damage is an injury to the head.
- The risk of permanent injury such that affects the spinal chord or permanent damage resulting from an injury to the head is very small in recreational gymnastics.
- The risk is slightly increased for squad gymnasts as they advance due to the speed, height and difficulty of the skills that they may be performing

**Prevention/minimisation:**

- Gymnasts are taken through the correct progressions and can perform the pre-requisite skills prior to performing the skill being learned.
- Adequate matting is used.
- A large amount of repetition of the skill is done with assistance or spotting before the gymnast is allowed to attempt it unaided.
- The gymnast must consistently show appropriate technique and confidence performing the element with assistance or spotting before attempting the element unaided.
- All coaches involved in coaching somersaulting skills are qualified to at least Club Coach level and understand the inherent dangers to their gymnasts.
- Coaches must only work within their level of qualification unless supervised by a more senior coach who is qualified to the level of the skill being practiced.
- If a coach feels that he or she requires assistance, even though qualified to the level of the skill that is being practised, he or she must seek help.
- Coaches and gymnasts must not attempt anything that they are not comfortable with.
- Gymnasts learning double somersaults are taught the progressions and then taken to another facility where they can practice the whole skill into a foam pit before they are allowed to perform the skill at the Alton Gymnastics Club.
- Gymnasts are supervised when using the equipment.
- Gymnasts are made aware of the dangers.
- Gymnasts returning to training after time off for any reason are re-introduced gradually, building up slowly and ensuring that fitness is regained before performing at the level at which they were previously working.

These measures serve to minimise the general risk of permanent injury major or minor but they cannot remove the risk altogether.

**Risk:** Risk of injury resulting from faulty equipment.

- This is considered minimal at Alton Gymnastics Club, but measures are still taken to further avoid the risk.

## **Prevention/Minimisation:**

- The equipment is rigged and de-rigged every session, so equipment is checked regularly for wear and damage each session, the equipment is checked to ensure it is correctly and safely erected.
- Although the Staff at the sports Centre bring the equipment out of the cupboard and place it in the hall, it is the job and responsibility of the Club Coaches to erect and make safe the various items of equipment before it is used.
- Club Coaches know and understand the correct set up of equipment and are aware of the inherent dangers of faulty equipment or set ups.
- All of the equipment used by Alton Gymnastics Club is of a high standard and is regularly checked, thus minimising risk in this area.

## **Risk:** General risk of injury resulting from trip hazards in the gymnasium.

- Due to the nature of any gymnasium layout there is always the risk of users tripping or falling around or over gymnastics equipment.

## **Prevention/Minimisation:**

- Coaches know and understand the correct set up of equipment and are aware of the inherent dangers of placing equipment thoughtlessly.
- Gymnasts and coaches move around the gym in a controlled manner, with running only as part of the training.
- Items of equipment that are not in use are placed in back in the store or at the side of the gym out of the working area.
- Items of equipment are placed tidily around the gym, with particular care taken with regard to the placement of mats and items of equipment at floor level that are most likely to represent a trip hazard.
- Gymnasts are reminded regularly about the risk of tripping in the gymnasium.
- To avoid potential risk to non-members and the general public, no non-members are allowed in the gymnasium during gymnastics training or set up of gymnastics equipment.

## **Summary of the risk assessment**

### **The main identified risks are:**

- Minor or Major sprains to joints from landing badly.
- Broken bones from falls from apparatus, such as to the wrists or arms.
- Overuse Injuries.
- Permanent injury, minor or major.
- General risk of injury including bruises, muscle strains, bad sprains, ligament damage and minor or major fractures due to element performance 'going wrong'.
- General risk of injury resulting from trip-hazards in the gymnasium.

It is accepted and understood that the risks affecting Squad gymnasts are slightly but still significantly greater than the risks affecting recreational gymnasts.

The main risk areas are from inverted skills and the speed required to perform more advanced skills.

Accidents cannot themselves be completely avoided, though the risk of accidents occurring can be minimised through certain measures. The risk of injury occurring due to an accident can also be minimised through certain measures.

Injuries that occur as a result of an element performance 'going wrong' are difficult to anticipate. The gymnast losing special orientation or scaring (bailing) out of a move can often cause an element performance to go wrong.

## **In summary, these are the measures in place to ensure the minimisation of the risk of accidents and injury at Alton Gymnastics Club:**

- Ensuring gymnasts are adequately warmed up.
- Ensuring gymnasts are adequately supervised.
- Making gymnasts aware of the dangers.
- Ensuring that gymnasts are taught the correct landing technique from the very earliest stage of training.
- Ensuring that gymnasts are taught safe falling technique from the earliest stage of training.
- Ensuring that gymnasts do not use a piece of apparatus that is considered too high for their ability or relative height.
- Using adequate matting.
- Ensuring that gymnasts are taken through the correct progressions and can perform the pre-requisite skills prior to performing the skill being learned.
- Ensuring that a large amount of repetition of the skill is done with assistance or spotting before the gymnast is allowed to attempt it unaided.
- Ensuring that the gymnast consistently shows appropriate technique and confidence in performing the element with assistance or spotting before attempting the element unaided.
- Ensuring both coach AND gymnast agree when it is safe to attempt the skill with less assistance and finally none.
- Using adequate and appropriate spotting.
- Ensuring coaches are sufficiently qualified for the skills they are teaching
- Ensuring coaches only work within their level of qualification unless supervised by a more senior coach who is qualified to the level of the skill being practiced.
- Ensuring coaches seek assistance when they need it.
- Ensuring coaches and gymnasts do not attempt anything that they are not comfortable with.
- Gymnasts learning double somersaults are taught the progressions and then taken to another facility where they can practice the whole skill into a foam pit before they are allowed to perform the skill at the Alton Gymnastics Club.
- Ensuring that conditioning and preparation is carried out as appropriate to the age, ability and training hours of the gymnast in order to develop the strength and fitness required for the demands that gymnastics makes upon the body.
- Ensuring that gymnasts returning to training after time off for any reason are re-introduced gradually, building up slowly and ensuring that fitness is regained before performing at the level at which they were previously working.
- Ensuring gymnasts do not practice skills that carry risk when they are too tired or when they are unwell or injured in any way.

# ***Alton Gymnastics Club***

RiskassessAGC.001

- Expecting and demanding a high level of discipline during training and classes.
- Expecting and demanding appropriate dress and compliance with the no-tolerance policy on jewellery.

A long process is followed before a gymnast is allowed to perform skills unaided that carry a risk. For this reason the dangers to gymnasts are minimised and safety remains high on the list of coaches priorities.

Alton Gymnastics Club do not consider the level of sport at their facility is life threatening except where there may be a medical reason that coaches are not aware of. For this reason parents have a legal obligation to ensure the coaches know of any such problem. Alton Gymnastics Club are not responsible for any such problem. If there is a medical problem that is aggravated by this sport, parents must advise Alton Gymnastics Club staff and decide if the child should continue. It is the parents decision in such cases, not that of Alton Gymnastics Club staff.

Alton Gymnastics Club do not accept responsibility for injuries that occur as a result of a gymnast acting contrary to instruction, whether direct or implied. This includes incidents when a gymnast has performed or attempted to perform a skill before instruction has been given or against the instructions of the coach. Gymnasts are all made aware of the gym rules and are constantly reminded of them. Gymnasts who are found to be breaking any rule may be excluded from the activity or dismissed from the class.

This document has not been prepared in order to alarm parents or coaches but is a requirement of Health and Safety rules and regulations.

The risk assessment and its summary are regularly checked to ensure it is correct and complete. It is also checked by a physiotherapist and other members of the Alton Gymnastics Club Team.

Any input into this document is checked and agreed by the undersigned.

Joanna Foley (Director of Gymnastics and Coaching)