

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

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.

### **Summary of the risk assessment**

Below is a summary of the detailed risk assessment. The full risk assessment is available on request.

#### **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'.

It is accepted and understood that the risks affecting competitive 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.

# **Alton Gymnastics Club**

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- 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 unaided.
- Using adequate and appropriate spotting techniques.
- 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 in Alton Sports Centre.
- 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.
- Expecting and demanding a high level of discipline during training and classes.
- Expecting and demanding appropriate dress and compliance with the 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 the coaches priorities.

Alton Gymnastics Club do not consider that the level of sport at their club 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 coach 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)