



INJURY, ILLNESS & PAIN POLICY

Version 1.0



Version History

Version	Summary of amendments/changes	Published Date
Version 1.0	Document Created	July 2024

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Introduction

In gymnastics, everyone has a responsibility to ensure safe and positive experiences for all participants. IGA recognises the duty of care to safeguard the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of gymnasts.

IGA clubs and activity providers are obligated to protect participants from undue harm through their actions and decisions, as legally defined by their duty of care. Detailed guidelines can be found in the **IGA Safeguarding document**.

To fulfil this duty, clubs and activity providers must establish and adhere to health and safety policies and procedures, including provisions for appropriate first aid and emergency response.

It's important to note that this document does not replace a club or venue's specific health and safety policy. Its purpose is to set mandatory standards aimed at preventing inappropriate practices related to pain, injury, and illness. For comprehensive information on health and safety requirements in gymnastics clubs and activity settings, please refer to the **IGA Health, Safety & Welfare Policy and Health**.

As gymnastics involves inherent risks of pain, injury, and illness, careful management is essential to mitigate these risks effectively. Managing pain is a personalised process that requires sensitive collaboration among the gymnast, parent/carer, coach, club, and where applicable, broader support networks.

This policy specifies its applicability, scope, and purpose. Should you have any questions or concerns after reviewing this document, please reach out to IGA.

To streamline communication, in this document, the term 'coaches' encompasses IGA's members who serve as coaches, helpers, gymnastics activity instructors, and volunteers. Similarly, 'clubs' refers to registered clubs, encompassing all gymnastics activity providers and venues. These guidelines are applicable to all clubs or venues affiliated with IGA.

Additionally, this document provides information on accessing additional support and emphasizes the prevention of poor practices. For details on the complaints process, please refer to the **IGA Complaints Policy and Procedures**. Clubs and coaches are encouraged to implement effective practices regarding pain, injury, and illness management, as detailed in our **Injury, Illness & Pain Guidance for Good Practice document**.

Key Responsibilities

- Clubs, coaches, and support practitioners are obligated to prevent harm and advocate for healthy practices. It is crucial that they adhere to the guidelines outlined in this document during gymnastics activities, ensuring the implementation of safe practices concerning pain, injury, and illness.
- Additional resources for parents/carers and gymnasts on safe practices for managing pain, injury, and illness can be accessed in the 'What do I need to know' materials. It is imperative that gymnasts and/or their parents/carers promptly report any instances of pain, injury, or illness to clubs and coaches.

Related Policies and Guidelines

- [Coaches Code of conduct: Coaching Procedures](#)
- [IGA Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Registered Clubs](#)
- [IGA's Complaints Policy](#)
- [IGA's Health, Safety and Welfare Policy](#)
- [Incident Reporting Procedures](#)

Key Definitions

- **Gymnastics:** This term encompasses all forms of gymnastics activities, sessions, training, and competitions, including all disciplines recognised by IGA (such as Acrobatics, Aerobics, Recreational Gymnastics, TeamGym, Disability Gymnastics, Preschool, Men's Artistic, Rhythmic, Trampoline & DMT, Tumbling, Women's Artistic) and related activities like freestyle gymnastics.
- **Pain:** Defined as an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience linked to actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage.
- **Injury:** Refers to tissue damage or disturbance of normal physical function resulting from sudden or repetitive transfer of kinetic energy.
- **Illness:** Any complaint or disorder experienced by a gymnast, not arising from injury, encompassing health-related issues affecting physical (e.g., influenza), mental (e.g., depression), or social well-being, or loss of essential elements (air, water, warmth).
- **Physical health:** Refers to the normal functioning of the body.
- **Emotional health:** The capacity to manage both positive and negative emotions effectively.
- **Mental health:** Describes the way individuals think, feel, and behave.
- **Gaslighting:** The act of manipulating someone to doubt their own perception of reality.

Important Considerations

- Emotional and mental well-being are as important as physical health.
- Pain is always a subjective experience influenced by various factors such as emotions, developmental aspects, cultural background, current situation, and past experiences, and should always be treated with respect.
- There are various ways individuals may express pain along with verbal descriptions.
- It is important to adhere to NHS guidelines when managing illness.

Injury, Illness and Pain Policy

Please note, for any head injuries or suspected head injuries, the principle of 'if in doubt, sit them out' should be applied.

- If a gymnast, parent/carer, or coach, in accordance with their Duty of Care, believes or has reason to believe that the gymnast is unable to fully or partially participate in gymnastics (such as performing specific skills) due to pain, injury, or illness, this must be respected and addressed by all parties involved.
- Discriminatory actions, threats, coercion, or any behaviors that could be interpreted as gaslighting, abuse of power imbalance, or emotional abuse regarding a gymnast's pain, injury, or illness are strictly prohibited under any circumstances.



- Before the gymnastics activity begins, the gymnast or parent/carer must inform the club or coach if the gymnast is experiencing pain, injury, or illness that they believe or have been advised will affect their participation. Clubs and coaches are required to follow the steps outlined below:

Step 1:

All information must be treated with respect and handled carefully.

Step 2:

Any decision regarding a gymnast's participation in gymnastics despite pain, injury, or illness should:

- a. Take into account the gymnast's short and long-term physical, emotional, and/or mental well-being.
- b. Prioritise the gymnast's best interests in the decision-making process.
- c. Involve collaboration between the gymnast, coach, parent/carer (for individuals under 16 or adults at risk), and, when appropriate, medical professionals and other support personnel.
- d. Aim to mitigate any present or potential risks to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental health.

**Step 3:**

In collaboration with the gymnast, any necessary adaptations or reasonable adjustments must be implemented in the gymnastics environment or activity to accommodate the reported or diagnosed health issue, condition, or concern. These adaptations could include modifying activities to avoid using the injured or painful body part while minimising risks to other areas, removing activities that cause mental or emotional distress, or considering alternatives to ensure safe participation.

Step 4:

Throughout gymnastics sessions, consistently monitor the gymnast's condition regarding their pain, injury, or illness to continuously mitigate any risks to their physical, emotional, or mental well-being.

During gymnastics, if a gymnast discloses experiencing pain, injury, or illness, or if a club or coach suspects a gymnast is affected by any pain, injury, or illness, clubs and coaches must adhere to the following steps:

Step 1:

If there are any concerns regarding pain, injury, or illness that require immediate medical attention, discontinue the activity and follow the emergency procedures of your club, venue, or event.

Step 2:

If emergency procedures are unnecessary, pause the activity as soon as possible and discuss the pain, injury, or illness complaint or concern with the gymnast.

Step 3:

Any decision regarding a gymnast's participation in gymnastics due to pain, injury, or illness must:

- a.** Take into account the gymnast's short and long-term physical, emotional, and/or mental health.
- b.** Prioritise the gymnast's best interests in the decision-making process.
- c.** Mitigate any present or potential risks to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental well-being.
- d.** Involve a collaborative decision-making process among the gymnast, coach, and, where appropriate, medical practitioners and broader support team.
- e.** Include informing the parent/carer (for individuals under 16 or at risk) at the earliest available opportunity of any impact on the gymnast's participation in gymnastics or their daily life.

For competitions or events, adherence to the regulations outlined in the respective competition handbook regarding a gymnast's pain, injury, or illness is required. In instances where a medical officer is appointed, decisions concerning a gymnast's health status and ability to compete will be made by the medical officer or the competition organiser based on the medical officer's recommendation, and this decision is final.

The earliest available opportunity for notifying the parent/carer may vary based on circumstances, considering the severity of the pain, injury, or illness, or the level of participation in the activity. While immediate notification might not always be necessary, clubs should have established procedures, such as accident forms, to ensure timely communication with parents/carers regarding any incidents of pain, injury, or illness.

**Step 4:**

Together with the gymnast, necessary adaptations or reasonable adjustments must be implemented in the gymnastics environment or activities to address the reported or diagnosed health issue. These adaptations may involve modifying activities to avoid using the injured or painful body part while minimising risks to other areas of the body, eliminating activities that cause mental or emotional distress, or preventing participation altogether if deemed necessary.

Step 5:

If the gymnast chooses to remain active in gymnastics or stays within the gymnastics environment, it is essential to regularly communicate with them regarding their pain, injury, or illness. This ongoing dialogue helps to continuously mitigate any risks or potential risks to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental well-being.

Step 6:

All accidents and first aid treatments, regardless of their severity, must be documented thoroughly using an accident report form. For further details, please refer to the IGA Incident Reporting and Procedures guidelines.

If the club and coach have concerns about the gymnast's pain, injury, or illness, they should recommend seeking medical advice from qualified practitioners such as GPs, Sports Doctors, or Physiotherapists.

For ongoing pain, injury, or illness concerns, clubs and coaches must maintain collaboration with the gymnast and parents/carers (for those under 16 or at risk), adapting gymnastics activities to minimise further risks to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental health.



When a gymnast returns to full or partial training after an absence due to pain, injury, or illness, clubs and coaches must ensure a gradual and safe progression through gymnastics activities. Continuous collaboration with the gymnast, parents/carers (for minors or those at risk), and potentially the wider support team is essential. It is important to adapt gymnastics practices in accordance with medical or sports science advice from qualified practitioners (e.g., strength and conditioning experts, psychologists) to mitigate any risks to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental health.

Preventing Poor Practice

Everyone should feel empowered to ask questions, seek help, or voice concerns, regardless of their role or involvement in gymnastics. Utilise the following information to confidently speak up if you observe or experience anything that seems amiss.

Query:

If you are uncertain or uncomfortable about a practice, comment, or situation you have encountered or observed, it is perfectly acceptable to discuss your concerns with someone you trust. This could be a coach, fellow gymnast, friend, welfare officer, parent or carer, or club manager.

Reflect:

Take a moment to reflect on what occurred and consider if anything could have been handled differently. Ask yourself if the situation would be acceptable outside of gymnastics.



Seek:

If you are uncertain or uncomfortable about a practice, comment, or situation you have encountered or observed, it is perfectly acceptable to discuss your concerns with someone you trust. This could be a coach, fellow gymnast, friend, welfare officer, parent or carer, or club manager.

Reflect:

Take a moment to reflect on what occurred and consider if anything could have been handled differently. Ask yourself if the situation would be acceptable outside of gymnastics.

Seek:

It's okay if you're unsure or don't know the answer. There are many people who can help, including other coaches, welfare officers, and the IGA Welfare Officer Team. All governing bodies have a duty of care, so any concerns will be appropriately escalated.

Making Mistakes:

It's okay to make a mistake. If it happens, take responsibility, apologise, and learn from it to prevent it from occurring again.

Raise:

If you feel the need to raise a concern, contact your club welfare officer. They will address your concern appropriately.

Recommendations:

Foster a psychologically safe environment in gymnastics by promoting open, honest, and transparent conversations with regular opportunities for feedback. Encourage and support an atmosphere where asking questions and respectful challenges are welcomed. Reflect regularly on the day, session, or event and encourage everyone to engage in daily reflection.