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Doing more harm than good

Five common first aid mistakes and how to avoid them

By Temmra Emrenfeld / Newsweek

Thank heavens for emergency rooms. But sometimes the first aid measures taken on the scene *before* a patient arrives at the hospital can make all the difference, especially if the ER is crowded. (On average you'll wait 45 minutes before seeing a doctor, according to the Centers for Disease Control, and longer in urban centers.) We asked two experts, Dr. Tom Scaletta, the outgoing president of the American Academy of Emergency Medicine, and Denise King, president of the Emergency Nurses Association, to identify the most common first aid mistakes—and what you should do instead.

1. Severely cut finger. It's surprisingly easy for a person to amputate part of a finger—for instance, while chopping vegetables or using an electric saw.

Don't try to preserve the loose part by placing it directly on ice.

Do wrap the severed part in damp gauze (saline would be ideal for wetting the cloth), place it in a watertight bag and place *the bag* on ice. Then be sure to bring the bag and ice to the emergency room. The patient will be going into surgery, so he's best off with an empty stomach. As for the wound on the hand or body, apply ice to reduce swelling and cover it with a clean, dry cloth.

2. Knocked-out tooth.

Don't scrub the tooth hard even if it's dirty (a gentle rinse is OK)

Do put the tooth in milk and go straight to the ER; there's a chance the tooth could be reimplanted.

3. Nosebleed.

Don't lean back. And after the bleeding has stopped, **don't** blow your nose or bend over.

Do sit upright and lean forward and pinch your nose steadily (just below the nasal bone) for five to 10 minutes. If the bleeding persists for 15 minutes (or if you think you are swallowing a lot of blood) go to the ER.



Nosebleeds: don't blow your nose

4. Bleeding.

Don't use tourniquets! You could cause permanent tissue damage.

Do apply steady pressure to the wound with a clean towel or gauze pack and wrap the wound securely. Go to the ER if the bleeding doesn't stop, or if the wound is gaping or caused by an animal bite. To help prevent shock, keep the victim warm.

5. Seizures.

Don't put anything in the victim's mouth.

Do lay the victim on the ground if possible in an open space and roll the victim onto his or her side. Call 911.

And when else should you call 911? Whenever you see or experience chest pain, fainting, confusion, uncontrollable bleeding or shortness of breath. The medics can get to work on arrival.

300,000 concussions every year

Concussions affect one third of college football players

By Peter Kent

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) occurs when the head strikes or is stuck by an object. The head does not have to experience an external blow for the brain to be injured. Brain damage can occur when the head is pushed strongly against the skull, such as with whiplash.



A moderate type of TBI is called a concussion. People who have had concussions usually recover without any long term effects unless that person has already had repeated concussions. Severe and continual post-concussion symptoms may be caused by multiple brain injuries. A very serious and dangerous condition or even death can occur if a second concussion is suffered while symptoms from a previous concussion still persist. This condition is called second-impact syndrome (SIS). Sports-Related Concussions ' Causes and Frequency

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 300,000 people experience concussions each year from sports injuries. Most sports-related concussions come from contact sports, especially football, boxing, hockey, and martial arts. Other major causes of a large number of sports-related concussions are falls or collisions in sports such as skiing, bicycling, horseback riding, basketball, and soccer. In soccer an additional risk for concussions is "heading" the ball.

The most likely population to suffer concussions due to sports activities are males between the ages of 16 and 25. Within this group, the risk is highest at the high school level. About 25 percent of the 300,000 sports-related concussions reported each year are suffered by high school students playing contact sports. At the college level, over one third of football players has suffered a concussion and about 20 percent have had multiple concussions.



Second impact concussions are serious

Dangers of Multiple Concussions

Second-impact syndrome (SIS), which is a concussion that occurs while the victim is still recovering from an earlier concussion, has resulted in at least 26 deaths in the past 20 years since this condition was first characterized. Most of the people getting concussions were not even in college yet.

While most cases of SIS and multiple concussions do not cause death, the neuropsychological brain damage they cause is significant. Many studies have shown that athletes who have suffered multiple concussions are more likely to

have prolonged learning difficulties and perform more poorly on neuropsychological tests compared to people who have had one concussion or no concussions. Some of the well-documented neuropsychological impairments in athletes who have had multiple concussions are:

- Reduced speed in processing new information
- Problem solving and planning difficulties
- Increased number of headaches
- Concentration difficulties
- Memory impairments
- Behavioral problems

Why Athletes Suffer Multiple Concussions

Factors that contribute to why athletes suffer multiple concussions are related to the ability to accurately assess severity and recovery from symptoms. For example, there are several different scales for rating severity at the time of the concussion but there is general lack of agreement on which to use. There is also lack of agreement on what amount of time should pass before athletes can safely return to sports. This is because there are not any widely accepted guidelines for assessing whether the athlete has recovered.

Using proper protective equipment can prevent many cases of concussion. For additional safety, a helmet or other form of suitable headgear should be used in sports where there is contact, or in sports where there is a risk of falling or crashing such as bicycling, horseback riding, or skiing. Custom fitted mouth pieces may also help prevent concussions in contact sports. In order for safety equipment to be effective, it should always be made sure that it fits well and that it is used solely for the purpose that it was meant to be used for.

Although the risk of concussion is inherent in sports participation, decisions as to what sport to participate in can help mitigate the risk of concussion. If you suffer from a brain injury received while playing a sport, you might like to contact an experienced TBI attorney. Your traumatic brain injury attorney can help you assess your potential TBI claim and help you get the compensation you deserve for the devastation incurred in traumatic brain injuries.

Are your cheerleaders at risk?

It's the number one cause of female athlete injuries

By Yossarian Fisher

All the guys in basketball jerseys, football pads and helmets, with their chiseled physiques, and hard and dirty reputations are put to shame when placed next to a cheerleader. A five foot girl, wearing short skirts and a sweater, turns out to be far braver and tougher than the guys on the court or the field. Why you ask? This is because cheerleading is one dangerous sport.



Types of Injury

At basketball and football games, you see players rolling their ankles, dislocating their shoulders, and other cringe worthy injuries. You see them grimace in pain as they are brought to the locker room to assess their injury. But these are mere bruises when compared to the type of pain cheerleaders face day in and day out.

Young high school and college girls have been reported to suffer concussions, bruised lungs, broken ribs, broken necks, spinal injuries and other worse damage to their small bodies. It is hard to imagine these girls, with their wide smiles and cheery disposition can suffer these horrendous injuries but one has to remember that the aesthetic aspects of cheerleading often hides or masks the inherent dangers.

When we see human pyramids, or girls being tossed up in the air as they twirl and spin their bodies, we tend to forget the reality of the situation and remain in awe of the performance. We forget to see the reality that these girls are basically throwing themselves 10 to 15 feet in the air with no safety line or net to catch them if they fall. All they have below them are the hands of young boys, who unfortunately, are surrounded by distractions. Seen in this light, the dangers of cheerleading become apparent.



Cheerleaders suffer many broken bones

Gravity of the Injuries

To get an idea of the gravity of these injuries, one only needs to look a few years back to find examples. In 2005, a 14 year old girl ruptured her spleen when she fell on her stomach as she was practicing a spin. In 2008, a 17 year old was sent into a coma, lost the use of her limbs and eventually died due to brain damage after a fall in a cheerleading contest. That same year another student, a 20 year old, died after being kicked in the chest in another competition.

Cheerleading also comprises the highest percentage of athlete-related injuries in high school and in college (for girls). In fact, 65% of all major injuries of female high school athletes were from cheerleading-related activities. In college, this percentage increases to 67% of all injuries of female athletes. This is even more astounding when one considers that from the country's 2.9 Million female athletes in high school, a mere 3% are cheerleaders.

Bravery is Equal to those of Other Athletes

The bravery that these young girls have should not be questioned nor dismissed. Even when faced with these statistics,

and the high probability of pain, we still see countless young girls trying out for cheerleading squads, and dancing their hearts off at competitions. They knowingly face the dangers with smiles on their faces. No one can doubt that the bravery these girls have match (if not exceed) those of the players they are cheering for.



Keep your smile intact!

How to avoid tooth and mouth injuries

By James Matthews DDS.

A few years ago, a dental journal called *ADA News* published an article that described what seemed like an unusual case: A child had suffered serious dental injuries after snagging his teeth on a basketball net while doing a slam-dunk. A freak accident? Not quite. After the article appeared, nearly 40 dentists wrote in with their own stories about would-be Michael Jordans who sacrificed their front teeth in pursuit of the perfect dunk.

In older children and adults, sports injuries are common. Dentists estimate that between 13% and 39% of dental injuries occur while playing sports.

Dental injuries also can occur even among those whose activities of choice are more sedate. Donald Sadowsky, D.D.S., M.P.H., Ph.D., professor of dentistry at Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery in New York, recalls treating a 13-year-old girl who had knocked out her front tooth while bowling.

"As the teenager prepared to release her bowling ball, she slipped on water that had been spilled on the bowling alley floor and fell face first onto the floor. She knocked out one of her front teeth and broke another front tooth too," Dr. Sadowsky remembers.

Basic Protection

Dental injuries aren't always permanent. Even if a tooth has been knocked out completely, it often can be saved if you get to a dentist quickly enough. In addition, minor chips and cracks can be repaired with "invisible" materials that are nearly as strong as the original tooth.

However, even "minor" mishaps can cause significant, and expensive, damage. If you enjoy sports or other high-risk activities, it's worth investing in some protection. The use of mouth guards among football players, for example, is believed to prevent about 200,000 oral injuries a year.



Mouth guards are a must for contact sports

There are two types of protection to choose from:

Helmets — If you enjoy any type of activity that involves speed or impact — such as playing football, skating or riding a bike or a scooter — a helmet is a must. Forget hand-me-downs; if the helmet doesn't fit correctly or is not appropriate for a particular sports, it may be too uncomfortable to wear.

Mouth guards — As many male and female student and adult athletes have discovered, wearing a mouth guard is one of the best ways to prevent a sudden trip to the dentist.

Some ready-to-wear, U-shaped mouth guards, made from rubber or vinyl materials, are available to purchase over-the-counter in many sporting goods stores. However, they generally do not fit well and, as a result, do not evenly distribute the force of an impact. Dr. Sadowsky recommends that you avoid using these type of mouth guards and suggests going to a dentist to have a custom-fitted mouth guard made to fit comfortably in your mouth and offer better protection.

If having a mouth guard custom-fit by a dentist isn't an option, then an alternative could be a "boil-and-bite" mouth guard. These mouth guards are made from a type of plastic that softens in boiling water. You place the mouth guard in boiling water, and once the plastic is soft, you put it into your mouth, bite down on it, and mold the softened plastic around your teeth using your fingers, lips and tongue. Be careful not to scald yourself when removing the mouth guard from the boiling water, and make sure that it isn't too hot to put into your mouth. If the mouth guard doesn't fit comfortably the first time, you can reheat it and do it again. These "boil-and-bite" mouth guards are available in many sporting goods stores.



Too much of a good thing

Why excessive exercise can be harmful to your health

By Dr. Gifford-Jones

Have you ever seen lions running? You bet they run when they're hungry and chasing prey. The only other time they exercise is at mating season when they're having sex every 20 minutes! But most of the time they lay around or sleep. Exercise is simply not high on their priority list, and they survive well without buying Nike running shoes.

Questioning the value of exercise to humans, however, is like damning Motherhood and apple pie. But every year in my office I see examples of excessive exercise causing needless injury, and it results in many aggravating problems.

One of my 60-year-old female patients decided it was time to build up muscles. So she hired a personal trainer. At each visit, she enthusiastically told me, her trainer praised her strength, and kept adding extra weights for her leg lifts. I advised her not to push her luck. But the weights kept piling on and on. Finally, something in her back snapped. Now she has a partially paralyzed left foot. She should have listened to the old sage who counselled, "Too much of anything can be worse than none at all". Another example of overuse is Olympic athletes. On TV screens they appear to be at the peak of physical form, lean, muscled and full of youth. But they all push themselves to extremes, playing through pain and often undergoing multiple operations due to injuries. And some end up with hips and knees like those of people twice their age.

Jordan Metz, of the Sports Medicine Institute for Young Athletes at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, says, "You see people 16 years of age with the bones of a 60- to 70-year-old person".

For instance, teenage gymnasts often experience a late puberty due to intense exercise and low body fat. By subjecting themselves to this routine before their bodies are fully developed can lead to lower bone density, osteoporosis and stress fractures. Marcia Whalen, an osteopathic physician in California, and one of the physicians for the U.S. Women's Olympic water polo team, says, "When you're doing any kind of activity repetitively over and over the way these athletes are doing, it's a set-up for injury". It's also a set-up for the rest of us who overdo it.

Cardiac arrest

Myra Cocker, a researcher at the Stephenson Cardiovascular Centre in Calgary, has been using imaging techniques to study athlete's hearts. It was hoped she and her colleagues would discover why some athletes in superb condition suffer sudden cardiac arrest and die. What they found was equally alarming.

48 Olympic caliber athletes with a mean age of 32 years were enlisted in the study. They were involved in swimming, cross country skiing, skating and

marathon running. Contrast-enhanced cardiovascular magnetic resonance scans were then done on the athletes. In addition, the same study was carried out on eight others in good health, but who were not involved in any training.

This study showed that 75% of the elite athletes had myocardial fibrosis (scarring of the heart's muscle). They also had large ventricles (chambers of the heart). At the moment it's not known what effect this finding will have on longevity. But they believe this scarring will prevent them from ever becoming world champions regardless of how hard they train. Just 13% of the control group had this condition.

Of course I'm not against moderate exercise when so many today are obese couch- potatoes. But I think Abraham Lincoln was right when he said, "The best two doctors are your right leg and your left leg". Walking, a moderate exercise, is still the best one.

So who wins the race in terms of longevity and good health? I'd place my bet on someone who inherits good genes and who doesn't ruin good joints and healthy hearts by overuse. My Mother entered her 94th year without ever running one block or doing one push up. But she was thin and active. I doubt that exercise would have added one week to her longevity. And I also don't believe lions would live any longer if they wore Nike running shoes.



Some athletes suffer cardiac arrest

Stay safe on rollerblades

The right techniques and equipment prevent injuries

By Sue Jan

Rollerblading is a wonderful sport and great exercise to keep you physically fit. People from all walks of life enjoy rollerblading simply because it is easy and fun. Coupled with this enjoyment of rollerblading are some important safety measures that you need to follow to avoid accidents or injuries.



Certain situations are beyond your control but that does not mean you should

throw all caution to the wind. You may take a nasty spill every now and then where you may suffer minor injuries such as scraped knees or bruised hands. Or you may suffer more serious injuries such as a collision or concussion from rollerblading. So it is absolutely critical that you use the proper rollerblading safety gear to avoid these injuries.

The rollerblade helmet is the most important piece of rollerblade protective equipment for rollerblading. You should never rollerblade without securing your helmet on first to avoid serious head injuries. Make sure that the helmet is of good quality and that it fits your head properly. An oversized rollerblade helmet is no good because it provides no protection whatsoever. On the other hand, small helmets are too tight and too uncomfortable. The interior lining of the helmet should be lined with cushioned padding for comfort and protection.

Here are other rollerblading safety tips:

1. Get the complete rollerblading protective gear including wrist guards, elbow pads and kneepads. Each type of equipment has its own specific safety function, and they are all designed to protect the main parts of your body from injuries and impact in case you land or fall accidentally. Not using these protective items may result in a bruised knee or broken wrist etc.
2. Learn the rollerblading basics first before you go on roads. To avoid accidents, you should practice the basics such as rollerblading forward, stopping and turning before you decide to rollerblade on the road.
3. Self-control and speed control matters. Be aware of your surroundings, especially when you are rollerblading on the road. If you are rollerblading too fast, then slow down. You will be prone to accident if you do not learn how to control your speed.
4. Watch out for road signs and road hazards. Watch out for potholes or cracks on the road, or for slippery oil or water patches, as missing these dangers might cause you to fall.
5. Always be courteous to fellow rollerbladers and pedestrians. You do not own the road; you share it with other rollerbladers and pedestrians, so be polite and courteous.
6. Traffic rules should still prevail. Follow traffic rules such as stopping at the red light when crossing the road in case oncoming cars do not see you.

Bear in mind that rollerblading is a great sport but could also be dangerous. As long as you keep the above safety tips in mind, rollerblading is a fun and enjoyable activity.