



The popularity of cheerleading continues to rise as record numbers of cheerleaders and cheer squads attend Universal Cheerleaders Association Championship events, up almost 10 percent from last year.

Participating in athletics helps teen girls make new friends and gives them a built-in support system, according to a survey conducted by Varsity. Playing team sports generally makes teen girls happier, builds their overall confidence and helps relieve stress.

As in any physical activity, safety is of the utmost importance. Parents, coaches and

cheerleaders need to learn where the greatest risks lie as well as the proper way to perform the techniques.

To ensure the safest conditions, parents should take an active role in selecting the right cheer program for their kids and continue to stay involved.

“With the current explosion of participation in cheerleading at all levels, it is paramount that parents, coaches and cheerleading organizations continue to put safety at the forefront of the sport,” says Dr. Jeff Dugas, medical director of USA Cheer and fellowship director at the American Sports Medicine Institute.

What Parents Can Do

Parents should ask the following questions before their child starts a cheer program:

- Has the school/organization conducted the appropriate background checks on all coaches?

What Cheerleaders Can Do

Cheerleaders should also be responsible for following at least six safety precautions:

- 1.** Know the rules for your school, college or all-star division/level.
- 2.** Ensure that your squad has an emergency action plan and has practiced it.
- 3.** Perform stunts, tumbling and routines only on appropriate surfaces.
- 4.** Warm up before stretching, jumping, tumbling, stunting and dancing.

5. Attempt new skills only in the presence of an experienced instructor.

6. Take the iCheerSafe pledge, which asks cheerleaders to commit to their responsibility to cheerleading safety.

By following these guidelines, cheerleaders will not only reduce their risk of injury but improve their chances of success in training and competition.

For more information, visit www.aacca.org.

— *North American Precise Synd., Inc.*

Take Spirit Squad Safety Seriously

Thursday, 11 October 2012 12:21
