

Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Youth Sport in Gymnastics Ireland

21: Physical Contact

Contact should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the gymnast - Don't do something that a child can do for themselves. Physical contact between adults (coaches in particular) and children should take place only when necessary to:

- Develop gymnastics skills or techniques.
- Treat an injury.
- Prevent an injury or accident from occurring.
- Comfort a distressed child or to celebrate their success.

What are good principles to follow?

- Physical contact should take place in the interests of and for the benefit of the child, rather than the adult involved.
- Adults should explain the nature of and reason for the physical contact to the child.
- Unless the situation is an emergency, the adult should ask the child for permission, for example to aid the demonstration a specific technique or skill
- Clubs and coaches should provide an induction for new young members and their parents/carers that covers guidance about any physical contact that will be required as part of our activities. The reasons for the physical contact and the nature of the physical contact should be explained and agreed.
- Children should be encouraged to voice concerns they have if any physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened to their coaches and children's officer (or their parents/carers).

What about children who need specific assistance due to disability or injury?

In the case of a young person with a disability, specific support or assistance may be required. The following guidelines should be followed:

- Efforts should be made to receive as much information as possible on the child when registering to ensure safe inclusion of him/her. There should be clear agreements on what is required.

- Parents/carers or their delegated care providers should be asked to undertake all intimate or personal care tasks for their child. This is not an appropriate role for coaches and others involved in leading activities.
- When children with disabilities are lifted or manually supported, they should be treated with dignity and respect.
- Relevant health and safety guidelines must be followed to ensure the safety of the child and those assisting.

Please note that the Gymnastics Ireland Disability Inclusion Policy advises Clubs to ensure that they have received all relevant medical information in relation to any club member or participant with a disability, to ensure that they are well enough physically, intellectually and emotionally to take part in club gymnastic activities or any Gymnastics Ireland events.

- they are aware of any club member or participant who has any of the following disabilities e.g. Down Syndrome, Spinal Cord Injury, Spinal Fusion, Spinal Stenosis, Dwarfism or any other condition which may increase the risk of injury due the nature of gymnastic activities and that medical clearance has been sought for any participant with the above disability before participation in club gymnastic activities or any Gymnastics Ireland events.

Atlantoaxial Instability (AAI) and Down Syndrome:

- Gymnastics Ireland requires that any member or participant with Down Syndrome must provide medical evidence establishing the absence of Atlantoaxial Instability (AAI) before he/she may participate in any gymnastic-related activity. This includes any Gymnastics Ireland events. - This screening must be undertaken by an appropriately qualified medical professional or chartered physiotherapist.

For further information please refer to Gymnastics Ireland Disability policy - https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/gymnasticsireland/downloads/GymABLE-Disability-Policy-2018_final.pdf