

# RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

## ***Gym Class – Reducing Potential for Injury***

***A recent study performed by Ohio State University found that injuries related to physical education have increased 150% from 24,000 injuries in 1997 to 62,000 injuries in 2007<sup>1</sup>. These injuries take place inside gymnasiums, multi-purpose rooms, on athletic fields, and on playgrounds.***

The types of injuries sustained by school-age children between 5 to 18 years old are commonly based on gender. Males typically injure their heads, which often result in concussions. Males also frequently injure their upper body, such as their shoulders and arms, while females typically injure the lower parts of their bodies, resulting in strains and sprains<sup>1</sup>.

Many older and smaller schools still have multi-purpose rooms that were designed to serve as cafeterias, music rooms and assembly halls. These spaces often have vinyl composite tile flooring<sup>2</sup> which does not absorb the energy of a fall as well as wood floors and synthetic sports surfaces. These rooms often do not have as much padding on the walls to cushion the blow of a student running into it.

Older gymnasiums and multi-purpose rooms also tend to have more tripping hazards, such as chairs, risers, cafeteria tables, or AV equipment being stored in the room for other purposes. A child completely caught up in an activity and running full speed may not notice before tripping over the hazard.

### ***Activities that are the most prone to causing injuries include:***

Activities involving high intensity running, jumping and contact where students can collide with each other or with a fixed object:

- Basketball
- Flag Football
- Floor Hockey
- Kickball
- Volleyball

### ***Minimizing Injury***

To help minimize injury when using in indoor gyms, alternative activities can be considered. These activities reduce the speed of running and the amount of personnel contact. Activities that entail lower risks can include:

- Badminton
- Wiffle ball
- Volleyball
- Bowling
- Ping pong
- Jump rope
- Aerobics

*This is a sample guideline furnished to you by Glatfelter Public Practice. Your organization should review it and make the necessary modifications to meet the needs of your organization. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing risk exposure to the public, personnel and property. For additional information on this topic, you may contact your GPP Risk Control Representative. [www.glatfelterpublicpractice.com](http://www.glatfelterpublicpractice.com)*

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## **Other tips to help reduce the risk of injury:**

- When possible, schedule indoor high intensity and contact sports in rooms equipped for such activities.
- Consider installing additional mats on walls, posts and other objects that lack proper padding where students could be injured running into them.
- Tripping hazards such as bleachers, carpets, etc. can be removed or made more easily visible to the participants.
- Court boundaries can be reduced so that there is more room in the out-of-bounds area for slowing down before contact with the object.
- Eliminate or identify potential pinch points such as gym equipment or bleachers.
- When appropriate review rules and safety precautions prior to athletic activities.

## **Sources:**

1. [www.findingdulcinea.com](http://www.findingdulcinea.com) "Gym Class Injuries Highlight Genders' Different Injury Risk"
2. <http://athleticbusiness.com> "Hard-as-Concrete Vinyl Composite Tile Still Exist in Gymnasiums, Rec Centers"