



National Cheer Safety  
Foundation  
Panel of Expert's

# International Guidelines For Return to Play After Concussion in Cheer

*Cheering for your life.*  
**NATIONAL  
CHEERSAFETY  
FOUNDATION**



## Return to Play Guidelines After A Concussion in Cheer

*Any cheerleader, 18 and under, who is suspected of or may have sustained a concussion during cheerleading should not be allowed to return to activity the same day.*

Historically, athletes with mild concussions were allowed to return to practice as long as they reported that their symptoms (headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion) had dissipated. These NCSF guidelines were developed to protect the cheerleader from possible further injury to his/her brain.



Once a concussion is diagnosed, the focus needs to be on “physical and cognitive rest until symptoms resolve”. Physical rest has always been the treatment for concussion; but an added focus for treatment to also include cognitive rest is included new criteria.



In other words, cheerleaders who are recovering from a concussion need to quiet their bodies and their minds for efficient healing to take place. The quieter the cheerleader’s body and mind, the quicker the recovery. This may mean that cheerleaders in school be required to miss classes as well as practice as part of their recovery plan.

Activities that require concentration and attention (i.e., school work, videogames, text messaging) may exacerbate the symptoms and possibly delay recovery.

## Graduated Return to Play Progression

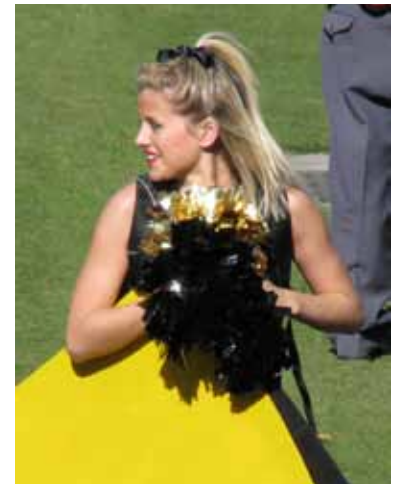
Most cheerleaders recover within several days. To ensure a gradual and safe progression for cheerleaders to return to play, the panel recommended a specific progression of activities. The progression levels begin with complete rest and progress through to return to play.

Each level should take 24 hours with the cheerleader asymptomatic (symptom free) before moving to the next level in the progression. If any symptoms occur during the progression, the cheerleader should drop back to the previous level and try to complete that level after a 24 hour rest period. The progression levels are listed below:

- No activity with complete physical rest and cognitive rest
- Light aerobic exercise (less than 70% of maximum heart rate)
- Cheer specific strength and conditioning
- Non-contact training (No tosses, no tumbling, no above shoulder-drills)
- Full contact practice
- Return to play

***Ideally, the progression should take about one week from asymptomatic rest to full competition.***

***A cheerleader should not return to play or practice without the written consent of a qualified health professional.***



- • • • • • • • • •
- ***\*If a cheerleader*** •
- ***sustains more than*** •
- ***one grade IIIb*** •
- ***concussion during their*** •
- ***career the NCSF panel*** •
- ***of experts recommend*** •
- ***that the cheerleader*** •
- ***cease participation in*** •
- ***contact sports.*** •
- • • • • • • • • •

# The Cheer Safety Experts™



**Fred Mueller, Ph.D.**

Founder of the NCCSIR  
Safety Director for USA  
Baseball  
Professor, University North  
Carolina-Chapel Hill  
Research Director, NOCSAE



**Katie Walsh Ed. D., ATC, LAT**

Director of Athletic Training  
Education  
Associate Professor  
Department of Health  
Education, East Carolina  
University



**James W. Vititoe, Esq.**

On the Board of Governors  
for the American Trial Lawyers  
Association, Trial Lawyers for  
Public Justice  
Current member of the  
American Bar Association



**Kimberly Archie B.S.**

Certified Trainer, CPR First Aid,  
AED  
Editor, the Cheer Safety Group  
Founder, National Cheer Safety  
Foundation



**Erik Swartz, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor of Athletic  
Training, University of New  
Hampshire  
Writing Chair: NATA Position  
Statement on the Acute Care  
of the Cervical Spine Injured  
Athlete

**Herb Appenzeller, Ed. D.**

Jefferson-Pilot Professor of  
Sport Management Emeritus,  
Guilford College  
Author of 19 books  
Coeditor, From the Gym To the  
Jury



**Michael Minix M.D.**

Physician  
Former University of Kentucky  
football player  
Founder, CAPPAA



**Cynthia Bir, Ph.D.**

Professor, Department of  
Biomedical Engineering  
Director of Research,  
Orthopedic Surgery at  
Wayne State University  
Lead Researcher, FSN Sports  
Science



**Krista Parks, B.S.  
Physical Therapist Assistant**

Catastrophic Cheer Injury  
Survivor  
CPR, First Aid, AED Certified  
Executive Director, National  
Cheer Safety Foundation



**Linda Lundy, M.A.**

Texas State Chairperson,  
American Aerobic Association  
Choreography, Jr. Japanese Team  
Judging Certified: USASF  
Legality, Cheer LTD, Cheer  
Power, UCA, COA, United Cheer,  
Cheer USA and Jam Brands



**Experts continued:**

Elizabeth Appenzeller MS  
Kim Fagan MD  
Stephen Lombardi Esq

Robert Cantu MD  
Leah Goodwin MBA  
Linda Lundy MA

William W. Evans MS  
Roberta Lahr JD  
Terry Ziegler EDD, ATC