

## ***How to Care for a Rip***

I was asked to share some information about how girls should care for their rips from bars. A rip is caused when the friction of the bar causes a separation in the skin either in the form of a blister or a torn callus. They can be quite uncomfortable but unfortunately a part of the sport of gymnastics. Here are some tips that can help with the prevention and treatment of rips.

**Prevention:** Gymnasts often develop tough skin on their hands from doing bars, this is good to a point but if that tough skin gets to thick and forms a callus that thick area of skin is likely to rip off forming a deeper more painful wound. If your child is developing these thick patches of skin just get a pumice stone and rub on these tougher areas so they don't build up to much.

**Remove Skin Flap:** Despite the best hand care every gymnast gets a rip some time in the sport, so proper care and treatment is important. Rips usually have flaps a part of the skin that did not completely come off the hand. This **MUST** be removed and it is important to get it removed completely. Many people like to trim this flap off with cuticle scissors or clip it off with nail clippers. This can work but 90% of the time you do not get it removed completely. The remaining flap gets hard and dry and will create more rips and hand problems. The best way to remove this flap of skin is to tear it off by grabbing the flap and pulling it down and at a slight angle like you would be "closing" the rip. This will produce a clean separation along the edge of the rip with no remaining skin flap left behind. **DO NOT** tear up and away from the rip like you are "opening" the rip this will expand the wound and hurt skin tissue that is not damaged. If you are not comfortable, the coaches are very good at this and willing to help, Alan is an expert and always willing to remove a hunk of your flesh!

Rips hurt but you will live even from a big, deep bad one, so tough it out and realize it is a right of passage for your sport. The next thing to do is the most important.

**Prevent Infection and Rip Care:** Go wash your hands with warm soaping water. This usually doesn't hurt to much especially if the water is just warm and not hot. Washing well will prevent infection and that is the only thing we worry about with rips. If we can keep infection away the wound will heal nicely and your back on bars in a couple days. Wash with warm soapy water! Next we dry it gently and we need to perform wound care. There are several treatments that are widely accepted. The two most widely accepted are the use of an antibiotic ointment or the use of DuoDerm.

DuoDerm is the probably the best treatment but can be a little more expensive. When you use this product purchased at Walgreens or the like, you apply it directly over the wound after it is clean and dry. You **DO NOT** put antibiotic ointment or any other treatment on the wound when using this product. Just apply and leave it alone. Follow instructions on the package.

Another treatment that I believe works almost as well and with stuff you have at home is to use Antibiotic ointments. Bacitracin, Neosporin and the like are great. We have an ointment in the gym called HandeBalm that is a medicated ointment that is also great and HandeBalm has an analgesic that helps stop the rip from stinging. We usually have girls put some on their rip at the gym after they wash their hands. With Antibiotic ointments you do **NOT** want to bandage the hand or rip. As the wound dries band aids and gauze can stick to the wound and when they are removed it actually removes healthy skin cells that are trying to help the healing. It is better to keep the rip open to the air as long as you can keep it clean. You will want to gently wash your hands and reapply the ointment a few times a day. After a couple days your hand will feel better and you will be able to start swinging bars again. If you need to work bars sooner or if your hand is still tender after a day or two make sure that the wound is not infected. If not you can swing bars with a little protection like a tape grip. It might not feel great but you should not have to much discomfort. If your rip is really bothering you make sure your coach knows and they will not make you do bars with an injured hand. With proper care a rip should be healed and you are able to swing on bars again without discomfort in 3-4 days.

The first few times you return to work on bars you might want to wear a tape grip to help protect your hand. Tape grips are easy to make and cheap. We allow our gymnasts with recent rips to wear tape grips. If you do not have a rip we do not allow compulsory gymnasts to wear tape grip or gymnastics grips. Leather Dowel grips are available to gymnasts when they get to the optional level and are spending more time on bars and working harder skills that put greater stress on their hands.

Hope this information helps you take care of your rips and get back to swinging bars!