

## Preventing Tumbling Injuries in Cheerleading

Claims received from Markel's Cheerleading program frequently involve injuries associated with tumbling activities. Back handsprings cause the most tumbling injuries, and require spotters to be both experienced and vigilant when supervising this activity. The American Association of Cheerleading Coaches & Advisors (AACCA) suggests the spotter must be able to move quickly and provide assistance on each successive flip-flop.

AACCA also recommends the following:

- Make sure that the tumbling area is sufficient and free of obstructions, and that the tumbling surface is smooth, level, clean, and dry.
- Develop a "traffic flow" plan that ensures safe participation.
- Make sure performers warm up properly before tumbling.
- Follow a well-planned program of skill progressions.
- Provide competent spotting according to the need and ability of each participant and the requirements of the maneuver being performed.
- Be sure that participants have demonstrated proficiency in executing proper landing techniques, and can protect themselves in case of uncontrolled landings and falls.
- Do not allow cheerleaders to tumble in improper attire, such as clothing that is restrictive or too loose. Do not let cheerleaders wear jewelry or chew gum.
- Exercise extreme caution, use appropriate progressions, and provide competent spotting when teaching somersaulting skills. These activities are considered to be "higher than ordinary risk."
- Skills involving a head-first entry (dive roll entry) are characterized by little or no margin for error, require unreasonably high risk and carry with them a dangerously high potential for serious, catastrophic injury or even death. Dive roll skills or any of their variations are considered to be inherently dangerous and, as such, are not recommended.
- Trampolines, mini-trampolines and other projectile devices are not recommended for any cheerleading activity.