



Your Young Gymnast's Spine...

Golden Gate Bridge or Door Hinge

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To Stretch or Not to Stretch?

o Great Listener Question:

A caring and thoughtful parent emailed us a super question:

Is Physical Therapy appropriate for my 8 yr old daughter to improve her flexibility in preparation for gymnastics this summer?

Short Answer = YES

Yes, injury prevention and performance based Physical Therapy can help improve your daughter's flexibility so she can enjoy gymnastics safely.

But there are bigger and more foundational questions to answer first...

- ***What are the common injuries young gymnasts suffer from?***
 - Lumbar hypermobility (excessive motion leading to pain) that can develop into stress reactions in bone and sometimes stress fracture
 - This occurs particularly with extension (backward bending)...needed during back hand springs for example
- ***What areas in your daughter's body need to be flexible to prevent excess lumbar spine stresses?***
 - Mid back (thoracic spine) and hips – the areas just above and below the low back are both key at sharing these extension motion needs
 - A lack of motion at the thoracic and hip regions can increase the demand on the lumbar spine to produce extension



- **Is she actually lacking flexibility?**
 - I recommend focusing on increasing flexibility only for those needing MORE motion than they own
 - More motion is NOT always the goal. It's easy for athletes and coaches to get caught up thinking like it's a Cirque de Soleil competition. Gymnastics has very specific motion demands. No more, no less. If her body already owns the motion needed to perform then she's good to go!
- **What does her backward bend in standing or better yet – a bridge on the floor look like?**
 - A smooth looking curve from shoulders to thighs would suggest that the extension motion is being “shared” across the entire spine and hips...that's a good start... **The Golden Gate Bridge**
 - A big crease at the base of the low back just above the pelvis and a flatter mid-back area suggest too much bending may be happening at a lower lumbar segment...that's a potential injury risk.... **The Door Hinge**

...more on this gymnast to come!

Remember

More flexibility isn't always better!

Know the key areas requiring good motion for your sport!

If you see all the motion happening at ONE place...

you may want to give us a call to check them out!

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