

Gymnastics For Fun & Fitness

The sport of gymnastics comes to us from the ancient Greeks, and has been a part of the Olympic Games since the modern Olympics began in 1896. But it isn't necessary to be an Olympic champion to enjoy gymnastics.

Very small children use the basic movements found in gymnastics--rolling, jumping, twisting, running, spinning and stretching. If you watch a small child during the course of a day, you will see them use these movements continuously. Small children enjoy learning gymnastics because they are much more flexible than adults, have a very high energy level, and are eager to learn. Gymnastics is an excellent way to channel their energy and enthusiasm!

Preschool and beginner level gymnastics skills are taught with fun, and most importantly, safety in mind. With the exception of the bar skills, most preschool and beginning level skills are taught on the floor level. The bars are lowered and mats placed underneath the bars for safety while teaching bar skills. The bars are often the preschoolers'

favorite piece of equipment! As the child progresses upward from lower level skills, instructors watch for children with potential for competition. These children are invited to participate in special gymnastics training classes designed to prepare them for competition.

Afterschool classes or recreation classes continue to build the student's skills. Along with learning new "tricks," the students become stronger and more flexible, and their self esteem soars. Even the smallest child is proud to say, "I did it all by myself!"

Competitive gymnastics requires more intensity and a faster pace of teaching. More time is required in the gym for practice and a commitment is necessary for success.

The sport of gymnastics certainly has many physical benefits, but there are many others that are not so obvious. Self discipline and self control become automatic to a competitive gymnast. One cannot be successful without hard work. Discipline and control bring suc-

cess. Improvement in school grades is a common benefit of competitive gymnastics. A gymnast learns to use his time efficiently. Homework is completed on time because the gymnast has learned to focus on the subject at hand. Many colleges offer gymnastics scholarships, which is an excellent way to earn a college degree!

Perhaps the greatest benefit for a child taking gymnastics classes is the sense of accomplishment. Regardless of skill level, success is available to each and every child.

Contributed by Beverly Simstein of North Point Gymnastics.



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YMCA

Pack a Picnic and go!

What says "summer" more than a picnic! Packing a picnic and escaping to the seashore or mountains is a terrific way to combine sunshine, fresh air and good food!

Picnics can range from the simple--peanut butter and jelly sandwiches--to the gourmet--tarragon chicken and pasta salad--It can be as close as your backyard or neighborhood park, or as faraway as the mountains or beach. It can be a romantic getaway or a family affair. Here are some rules to make your next picnic easy, fun and enjoyable:

1. Bring a variety of foods to suit everyone's taste, but also try to offer something you normally wouldn't eat at home.
2. Remember, picnic foods are finger foods. Having to use a knife and fork on a paper plate is begging for disaster.
3. Don't flirt with food poisoning. Don't leave food out of ice chests while you sun or swim. Avoid foods that spoil easily, such as those containing mayonnaise or cream.
4. Plan for portability. Don't plan for more items than can be easily carried by the number in the party.
5. Don't forget the essentials: plates, cups, serving utensils if needed, napkins, a tablecloth, and especially a garbage bag for cleanup. Be sure to bring extras in case of blowaways or accidents.
6. Put condiments and sauces in plastic containers with tight-fitting covers. And don't forget the salt and pepper.
7. To add to the enjoyment of the day, bring a portable tape deck with relaxing music such as classical or new age, a good book, frisbee, or other outdoor game.
8. If you'll be out in the sun for any length of time, bring along the sunscreen and a hat or sunglasses.

Looking for a new picnic idea? Try these!

TARRAGON CHICKEN: Wash and dry 4 skinless boneless chicken breasts and cut into pieces. Melt 4 tablespoons butter in skillet and saute 4 chopped shallots until tender. Add chicken pieces and brown on all sides. Add 1/2 cup dry white wine, 2 teaspoons dried tarragon and salt and pepper. Cook uncovered, turning several times until done. Cool in pan and refrigerate.

MELON WITH PROSCIUTTO: Peel and seed one ripe melon and cut into small chunks. Wrap each piece in a small strip of prosciutto ham and secure with toothpick.

PASTA AND ARTICHOKE SALAD: Cook one lb. box of shell or twist macaroni and drain. Add 1/2 cup olive oil. Chop one 8-oz. jar of marinated artichoke hearts and add to pasta, along with sauce they were packed in. Add 1 cup combination of chopped fresh basil, dill, parsley and 1 teaspoon dried oregano. Add 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese and salt and pepper to taste, and juice of 1/2 lemon. Stir well and refrigerate. Allow to

sit out a few minutes before serving to allow olive oil to liquefy.

Picnics are the ultimate movable feasts! Be creative with your menu and your destination, and celebrate the season of summer time!



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