

Coach's Quick-Reference Guide

Coaching Gymnasts Ages 6–15: Nutrition & Growth Cheat Sheet

Key Fueling Principles

- Kids need **frequent fueling** (every 2–3 hours)
- Carbs = primary energy source
- Protein supports muscle repair
- Hydration affects performance + focus

Growth Spurts: What Coaches Should Expect

- Temporary coordination dips
- Increased fatigue
- Height changes affecting timing/form
- Higher risk of overuse injuries

Red Flags Coaches Should Watch For

- Limping or altered movement
- Pain that worsens during practice
- Pain that doesn't improve with rest
- Avoiding skills, they normally do confidently

Common Growth-Related Injuries (Coach Summary)

Osgood–Schlatter (Knee)

Pain below kneecap; aggravated by jumping/kneeling. **Modify:** Reduce impact; avoid kneeling; add quad stretching.

Sever's Disease (Heel)

Heel pain; toe-walking. **Modify:** Lower impact; cushioned shoes; calf stretching.

SLJ Syndrome (Lower Kneecap)

Pain at bottom of kneecap. **Modify:** Reduce sprinting/jumping; strengthen hips/quads.

Shin Splints

Shin pain with running/jumping. **Modify:** Lower impact; check footwear; gradual progression.

Growth Plate Irritation

Joint pain/swelling. **Modify:** Rest from high-impact skills; monitor closely.

SCFE (Hip — Serious)

Hip/groin/knee pain + limping. **Action:** Stop activity and notify parents immediately.

How Coaches Can Support Athletes

- Encourage fueling before/after practice
- Build in water breaks
- Normalize rest and recovery
- Communicate with parents about pain patterns
- Adjust training loads during growth spurts