

## RIPS / BLISTERS

Rips are a common, although painful, occurrence in the sport of gymnastics. Everyone gets them, from the beginner to the elite level athlete. For the novice gymnast, rips normally occur because the gymnast's grip on the bar is too tight, through fear or lack of familiarity with the skill. Advanced gymnasts usually rip because they allow an excess of callous to develop on their hands.



A rip is a separation of the upper layers of skin in the palm of the hand from lower layers of blood rich tissue. An excessively tight grip or callous build-up allows the skin to bunch up as you are swinging around the bar. The force of the swing pulls the upper layer of skin away from the lower layers causing a pocket to form which may become a blister or fill with blood. Whichever occurs, you can be sure that a rip is imminent. Prevention is the key. A rip can be as disabling as a big injury. A gymnast's rip compares to a blister on the heel of a marathon runner - a disastrous situation that can ruin the race.

For the novice gymnast, simple training in appropriate swing techniques and grip change will help alleviate several rips. For the more advanced gymnast, a daily regimen of hand care must be put into effect to minimize rips and keep bar workout times more effective.

### Before You Rip

1. After every workout, wash your hands with soap and water, then rub hand lotion into the front and back of your hands.
2. Prevent excess callous from building up by rubbing the affected areas with a pumice stone. To find the areas of excess callous, soak the hands in water for about ten minutes and you will be able to notice areas on the palm that retain a whitish colour while the rest of the skin stays pink. Use the pumice stone only as necessary. Excessive use will cause the hands to be constantly sore during workouts.
3. Rub hand lotion into your hands at night before going to sleep and, if necessary, when you get up in the morning. Always keep your hands moist.

## When You First Rip

1. Remove the excess skin carefully. A sterilized pair of nail clippers (to prevent infection) should work nicely, then wash with soap and water.

Do not put hand lotion on a fresh rip. Cover the rip with some "over-the-counter" vaseline or burn cream so the injured area has a chance to breathe. Some pharmacies carry products called "Second Skin" or "NuSkin" that comes in patch or liquid form and may be placed directly over the rip.

2. Before going to sleep that night, put some ointment on the rip and cover your hand with a sock or glove with the fingers cut out to keep the ointment off the sheets and out of your eyes. This treatment should continue until the rip is covered with new skin.

## After You Have Ripped

1. Once new skin has covered the rip, continue using hand lotion as described above. If the rip is allowed to dry up, the skin will crack and you will continue to rip in the same spot. Sometimes rubbing lip balm over a drying rip can also prevent cracking.
2. If you must workout again after ripping, do not cover the rip with the sticky side of the tape. Instead lay a small piece of tape sticky-side up over the rip so it comes in contact with the tape you are using to protect your hand.

On nights when you have particularly hard workouts on bars and your hands are hot and throbbing, it is a good idea to soak them in cool water or hold ice cubes in your hands until they melt. This will help the inflamed tissues to cool off. Just before a competition, you can deaden the pain of a rip by keeping an ice pack on it, or soaking the hands in a slush bath of ice water for ten minutes. This will help keep your concentration on the routine instead of the pain of the rip. However, the hand should return to normal warmth before the actual competition.

There is a saying, "Discipline weighs ounces, while regret weighs a ton." Discipline yourself to take care of your hands before and after every workout so that when your chance comes to make it big in the championship meet, you will be fully prepared.