



Chalk it up to Safety

Chalk has been around almost as long as modern gymnastics. It has the dual purpose of absorbing perspiration and reducing friction. It's technically Magnesium Carbonate and in the earlier days of gymnastics it was referred to as mag. It also provides some corollary benefit. Applying chalk provides a calming effect to the preperformance nerves of the gymnast. There is no other explanation for the multiple times we chalk up for a single routine. Chalking up to a gymnast is similar to the baseball player's habits of adjusting helmet and batting gloves over and over.

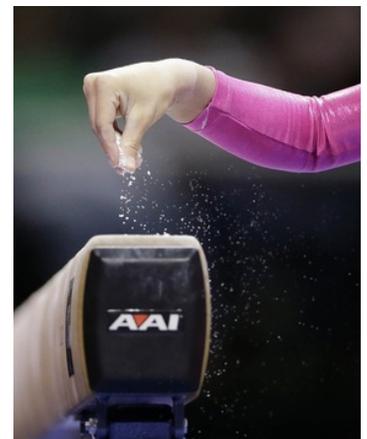
Chalk also has a social benefit at the chalk bowl is the gymnasts equivalent of the office water cooler. As gymnasts gather they get to share everything from difficult tricks to their after-practice plans. Sometimes chalk is even applied directly to the equipment either as surface prep or to provide markings for skill positions. The correct amount of chalk can be disputed but in reality, a good portion of what is applied is lost in the air, on the surrounding mats or back in the chalk bowl.



What's ironic is the fact that the very product that was discovered and used for the safety of the gymnast can in certain conditions be harmful. We breathe in the chalk in the air which is not good for our respiratory systems. The chalk on the mats while it does absorb moisture actually causes the mats to be more slippery and require more frequent cleaning. Chalk caked on bars, rails, and pommels can cause uneven surface and create more friction and stress on the hands.

Ok, so what's the point? Chalk has a great purpose and gymnasts need to use it and probably always will. As in many substances moderation is always good. Careful application is essential. And regular cleanup is imperative. There are some key take-aways in chalk use and there are ways to keep it clean and safe. Here are a few:

- Always apply chalk with hands in or over a chalk bowl so the extra ends up back in the bowl not on the floor.
- There are devices that help keep the air clean. One is called a chalk eater and it takes particles out of the air. Clean your air filters regularly and keep the gym properly ventilated.
- Clean your mats, pits, and carpets regularly. The vacuum is a wonderful invention.



AAI is committed to fostering a safe, fun and healthy environment for the sport of gymnastics. For every case of chalk purchased online, AAI will donate **10% of sales to the Safe Sport initiative.**

Give back to the sport we love and order your chalk at www.AAIgymstore.com!

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