



**OVERVIEW:**

These guidelines cover indoor and outdoor climbing walls that are run commercially by qualified vendors. These vendors supply certified instructors during climbing activities. The guidelines assume safety ropes for any climbing over a specified height (about 6 feet), padded mats at the base of the wall, and required safety equipment (helmet, shoes, etc.) and other similar requirements typically found at commercial climbing walls.

Note: These guidelines do not cover rock climbing, scrambling, mountaineering, bouldering, or any other activity outside of a commercially run climbing wall.

**KEY INJURIES ARE:**

Soft tissue injuries happen during climbing. You can have soft tissue damage after even one climbing activity. They happen when the upper body attempts to lift and support the body weight. The most common ones are:

1. Fingers: tendons in the fingers can be strained or pulled.
2. Elbows: tendonitis is a common injury.
3. Shoulders: rotator cuff damage, tendonitis, other soft tissue damage.

Preventing injuries of this type depend on proper warm-up and cool-down. Be sure to stretch and warm up (you should have a light sweat going) before getting on the wall. Perform long, slow, relaxing stretches before sitting and allowing your muscles to cool down. If you feel soft tissue pain, treat it with RICE: rest, ice, compression, elevation.

Climbing is an inherently dangerous activity. In addition to soft tissue injuries:

1. The **hazards** of ascending or descending steep terrain, including the potential of falling and hitting rocks, walls, holds, the ground or other people;
2. Using harnesses, ropes, carabineers, and other climbing equipment;
3. Rope burn and abrasions from contact with rough climbing surfaces;
4. Man-made objects falling from above including but not limited to ropes, carabineers, other climbing gear, climbing holds, bolts, personal gear;
5. Other people falling upon or against you;
6. The physical exertion associated with this activity

Injuries that can happen from these hazards can be severe, and can include sprained joints (like ankles and knees), fractures, back injuries, and neck injuries.

**BEFORE THE TRIP:**

1. Verify that the adult/student ratio is 1:10. However, many vendors require one adult for every climber under 14 to supervise them on the wall.
2. Find out if you need to bring your own shoes, or whether climbing shoes are available for rent. If you need to bring your own shoes, choose shoes that fit snugly, are not too worn, and that have adequate tread.
3. If you are a beginner, you will need to take classes and pass some tests to be able to use certain features of the climbing walls.

**DURING THE TRIP:**

1. Stretch before climbing. Many muscle groups are used in climbing, and they all need to be stretched, including triceps, biceps, deltoids, forearms, hamstrings, quads, and groins.
2. Check handholds as if you were out in the field. They have been known to break.
3. Make sure the mats are placed properly. If you fall, you really want to land on the mat.
4. Hazardous jewelry, watches, objects in pockets, and hanging clothing items must be removed and it is recommended that valuables be left in a secured place.
5. Participants must remove objects in the mouth (gum, candy, etc.) when climbing.
6. Food and drinks must be kept away from the climbing area and all other activity areas.
7. There are posted rules for using each climbing wall. Read them aloud to your students.
8. Always have at least one adult on the ground for supervision in addition to any direct supervision of individual climbers.