Background Growth/maturation and training load have been identified as risk factors for injury in youth sport. However, in gymnastics little is known regarding these risk factors for injury.

Objective To understand current awareness and practice of coaches in relation to growth/maturation and training load in young, competitive British gymnasts.

Design Qualitative approach consisting of focus groups and inductive thematic analysis

Setting Men’s artistic (MAG), Women’s artistic (WAG) and Trampoline (TRA) coaches of Great Britain’s National Development Programme (pathway) gymnasts.

Participants 44 (16 Female) pathway coaches took part in the study. 11 coaches worked within MAG, 15 within WAG and 18 within TRA gymnastics.

Assessment of Risk Factors Eight focus groups (2 MAG, 3 WAG, 3 TRA) were conducted to explore insights and experiences of coaches around the areas of growth/maturation and training load in relation to injury and its prevention. Data was analysed manually using an inductive thematic approach to identify core themes related to the study aim.

Main Outcome Measurements To determine the core themes and sub-themes related to growth/maturation and training load that were important to these coaches, specifically as related to injury and its prevention.

Results Coach awareness of the physical changes and injuries that occurred during growth/maturation was high across all disciplines. Psychological challenges and loss of skills were also identified as occurring during this time. Conversely, the awareness and practice of monitoring growth and maturity and training load for injury prevention varied between disciplines. Additionally, sports science and medicine practitioners were identified as key stakeholders in managing and preventing injuries during growth.

Conclusions The study highlights coach awareness, experiences and challenges that accompanies growth and maturation in their gymnasts. This has implications and considerations for injury and its prevention, including early identification of the growth spurt, monitoring and modifying training in consultation with key stakeholders and further coach education.

002 ABSTRACT WITHDRAWN