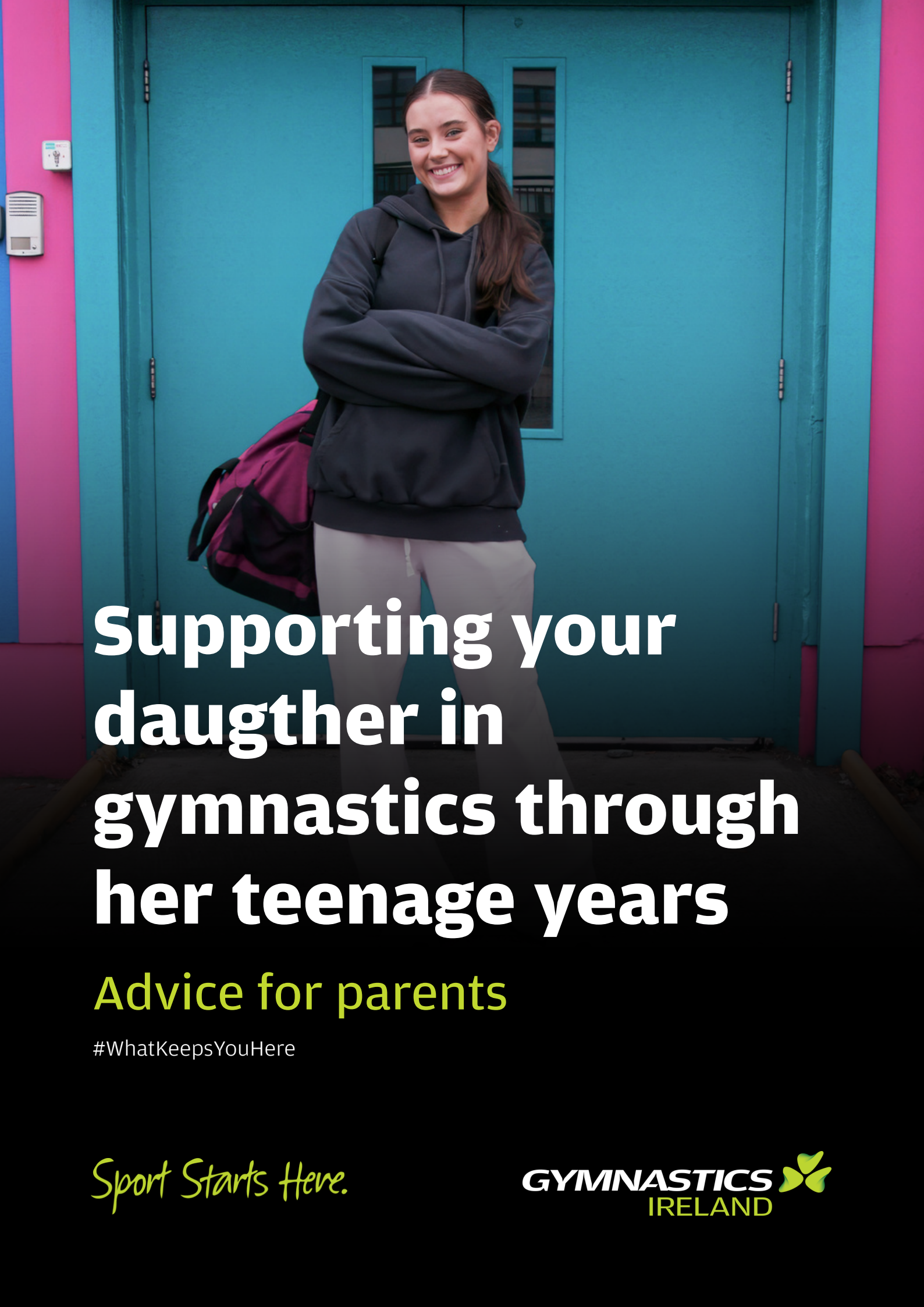




Supporting your daughter in gymnastics through her teenage years

Advice for parents

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Supporting your daughter through her teenage years

Advice for parents

Many girls drop out of gymnastics as they move into their teenage years. Between balancing training with increasing school pressures, exploring other hobbies, and navigating teenage friendships, girls can find it difficult to see where gymnastics fits in with their changing identities despite still enjoying it. On top of this, many girls feel there is a ceiling to their progression in gymnastics and begin to question their place in the sport as their bodies change during puberty. This guide shares helpful tips for parents who are looking to support their daughters to continue their journey in gymnastics during this time in their lives.

Reframing Progress

We know that learning new skills is important to girls in gymnastics, and is closely linked with enjoyment, motivation and feelings of pride. But if progress stalls or slows, particularly during puberty, this can leave girls feeling like there's no point continuing in the sport.

- **Recognise and reinforce the benefits of staying in gymnastics beyond mastering new skills** and techniques and focus conversations on enjoyment and effort rather than only on outcomes.
- **Encourage your daughter to take pride in other parts of her life in gymnastics**, like having fun training with friends, being part of a community, developing teamwork and leadership skills, supporting other girls and being resilient as she works through challenges. For more ideas [see 'The Gymnast's Voice' research here](#).



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Supporting girls through puberty

When girls in gymnastics hit puberty, some experience a change in their physical abilities, with things like periods and changing body shape adding new challenges to their participation. Whilst gymnastics can help girls to feel fit, strong and healthy, the changes they experience during puberty can lead to them feeling they're no longer good enough to continue in the sport.

Girls often feel more self-conscious in their teenage years. In a sport like gymnastics these feelings can be intensified by the strong focus on aesthetics and appearance: being required to wear tight clothing, feeling there is an expectation to have a certain body shape and to be seen to regularly improve and master skills.

- **Open the conversation by validating these feelings** and making sure your daughter knows it's normal to have these feelings during this stage of life.
- **Support your daughter to have a better understanding of puberty** and how to manage this in the context of sport, which can help her continue to enjoy the benefits of participating in gymnastics.
- **Encourage her to talk to her coaches** if she needs advice or support
- **Speak to your daughter's coach** about issues or concerns you might have to see if they can offer advice or extra support
- Support your daughter by **focusing on finding joy in gymnastics** outside of performance or appearance.
- **Find helpful resources** on the [Sport Ireland HERMOVES](#) website to help guide you and your daughter.

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Busy life, healthy balance

As girls enter their teenage years, they are often juggling many competing priorities such as school exams, multiple hobbies and shifting friendship dynamics. They might be keen to explore other sports alongside gymnastics or shift focus to other sports if they feel they can't progress further in gymnastics. At this stage of life, building independence and identity are key; giving your daughter support to make decisions around how to balance different priorities could support her longer-term engagement in gymnastics.

- **Make space for open and honest conversations** with your daughter about how she can balance different priorities and life pressures.
- **Support your daughter to have conversations with her coaches** about her future in gymnastics and support her to balance her participation in gymnastics with the other demands on her time, reminding her that gymnastics is not 'all or nothing'.
- **Remind your daughter what else gymnastics gives her**, like time with friends or opportunities to de-stress from the pressures of being a teenager.



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