

# dance injury prevention

Many dance injuries can be prevented by increasing the level of awareness and knowledge among dancers, parents and instructors. Dance injuries differ from traditional team sport injuries, as dancers typically dance year-round with minimal rest or cross-training. Dancers can prevent injuries by cross-training with appropriate conditioning programs, learning correct dance technique principles and resting any previously injured sites.

## common dance injuries

- Overuse injuries (often resulting from poor technique training)
- Sprains/strains, predominantly with knees and ankles
- Shin splints
- Stress fractures
- Tendonitis, predominantly Achilles tendon (heel cord) and toes
- Muscle spasms, predominantly hamstrings (back of thigh), gastrocnemius/soleus (calf) and back
- Dislocations, predominantly with patellas (kneecaps) and shoulders
- Knee pains (patellofemoral pain, chondromalacia and meniscal injuries)
- Blisters on feet and toenail injuries
- Impact injuries (bruises and contusions)
- Dehydration and malnutrition



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## preventing dance injuries

- Work with a dance instructor who is knowledgeable about injury prevention, correct technique training and proper placement of child/adolescent into appropriate age, level and style of dance class.
- Establish a good stretching program including hip flexors (front of the hip), hip adductors (inside of leg), hip abductors (outside of leg), hip rotators (back of hip), quadriceps (front of thighs), hamstrings (back of thighs), gastrocnemius/soleus (calves), back/trunk and neck. Be cautious of over stretching if already extremely flexible.
- Establish a good strengthening program to include hip flexors, hip adductors, hip abductors, hip rotators, quadriceps, hamstrings, gastrocnemius/soleus, shoulder girdle, back/trunk and neck. It should be noted that for dancers, strengthening is done through techniques versus weightlifting. Dancers need long, lean, but very strong muscles, versus bulky muscles that interfere with their flexibility and fluidity of movements.
- Establish activities that promote balance reactions and proprioception (body awareness).
- Establish a plyometric/agility dance program.
- Wear supportive shoes appropriate for dance.
- Tape or brace joints if they are unstable or have a history of repetitive injuries.
- Be proactive in learning the correct techniques.
- Limit practice times, age appropriately, to prevent extreme fatigue.
- Hydrate 30 minutes prior to dancing and as needed thereafter.
- Dance on smooth surfaces that provide traction and give with impact (elevated wood floors, Marley floors, etc.). Utilize rosin (anti-slip rock powder) on shoes/feet to prevent falls.

## dance conditioning programs

- Yoga
- Pilates technique
- Alexander technique

## pre-performance warm-up guidelines

It is recommended to have a pre-performance warm-up in place for young dancers to prepare their bodies for the demands of powerful bursts of repetitive movements. A comprehensive warm-up will take approximately 30 minutes.

- Start with five minutes of light aerobic movements to gradually raise the heart rate and warm-up muscles allowing for better blood flow during stretches.
- Spend at least 15 minutes stretching hip flexors, hip adductors, hip abductors, hip rotators, quadriceps, hamstrings, gastrocnemius/soleus, back/trunk and neck. Each static stretch should be held at least 30 seconds.
- Spend five minutes on deep core stability and balance techniques.
- Finish with high-intensity, multi-directional leaps, jumps and stunts for five minutes.

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