

# DANCER HEALTH TIPS FROM UAB SPORTS AND EXERCISE MEDICINE

## Low Back Pain in Dancers

Dr. Dale Colorado

Low back pain and low back injury are common in dancers. A recent systematic review found that low back pain was the cause of dancers having to sit out of performances and rehearsals 11% of the time<sup>1</sup>. In addition, low back pain was the reason for dancers seeking medical attention for an injury 11% of the time. Interestingly, the article found that 73% of dancers will experience at least one episode of low back pain each year.

This discrepancy may suggest two things: 1) dancers may not seek medical attention for their low back pain and can maintain high levels of performance despite the presence of pain, and 2) dancers may experience pain or injury at sites that do not include the lower back (such as the hip, knee, or foot) but these other pains/injuries can also result in low back pain.



A history of low back pain can predict future episodes of low back pain. Ignoring or “pushing through” low back pain can ultimately lead to worsening or recurrent symptoms and more missed performances / rehearsals. Evaluating low back pain should not only include treatment and management of the current pain, but also education and prevention of future low back pain.

The cause of low back pain is often NOT the spine. Healthcare providers must be aware of non-spinal pain

generators and understand the relationship between the lower back and other body regions. Low back pain is complex and dancers are unique. Early access to healthcare providers with expertise in both can improve pain, improve function, decrease time lost from dancing, and minimize future low back pain.

Is there a dancer health related topic you want to learn more about? Or maybe you have a specific question? Send those to us via email ([rachel@alabamadancecouncil.org](mailto:rachel@alabamadancecouncil.org)) and we will try to answer them in future articles.

### References:

- 1 Swain CT, Bradshaw EJ, Ekegren CL, et al. The epidemiology of low back pain and injury in dance: a systematic review. *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther.* 2019; 49(4): 239-252.

**About the Author:**

Dr. Dale Colorado is an Associate Professor and Vice Chair in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at UAB. He serves as Medical Director of Sports and Musculoskeletal Medicine, as well as Medical Director of Performing Arts Medicine. He is board certified in both Sports Medicine and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Dr. Colorado has lectured nationally and written multiple articles and textbook chapters on musculoskeletal issues related to performing arts medicine and sports medicine. He is a member of the Performing Arts Medicine Association and International Association for Dance Medicine and Science.

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