

DANCER HEALTH TIPS FROM UAB SPORTS & EXERCISE MEDICINE

Best Warm-Ups Before Dancing

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Warm-up exercises before dancing or any increased physical activities is important to prevent injury and improve performance. Warming up can increase the blood flow and flexibility of your muscles to prepare for the demands of exercising and performing. However, what is the best warm-up for dancers?



There is little consensus among dancers on the best design and execution of warm-up routines. In addition, there is limited data on warm-up routines and their association with injuries. Traditional approaches are typically based on stretching routines followed by skill drills. Stretching can be either static (when you hold a stretch for a period of time) or dynamic (which involves stretching through controlled movements).

Prolonged static stretching has been shown to decrease power production and muscle activation, which may potentially negatively impact performance. In contrast, dynamic stretching has been shown to enhance many aspects of sports performance. Exclusive reliance on static stretching for warm-up should be avoided, and a combination of both static and dynamic stretching is encouraged.

Neuromuscular sport-specific warm-up has been shown to prevent injuries in athletes and dancers. This warm-up targets athlete's proprioception (or joint position sense), balance, and sensorimotor abilities without engaging in technical drills. A typical neuromuscular warm-up may include aerobic exercises (such as jogging or jumping jacks), balance exercises, strength exercises (such as lunges or planks), and agility exercises (such as multidirectional jumps).

More research is needed on this topic, particularly with dancers. However, some great warm-ups to incorporate before dancing include jumping jacks, neck turns, shoulder rolls, leg and hip swings, ankle circles, lunge stretches, and heel raises.

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) and we will try to answer them in future articles.

References:

Morrin N, Redding E. Acute effects of warm-up stretch protocols on balance, vertical jump height, and range of motion in dancers. *J Dance Med Sci.* 2013;17(1):34-40.

Kaufmann JE, Nelissen RGHH, Stubbe JH, Gademan MGJ. Neuromuscular Warm-Up is Associated with Fewer Overuse Injuries in Ballet Dancers Compared to Traditional Ballet-Specific Warm-Up. *J Dance Med Sci.* 2022 Dec 15;26(4):244-254.

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