

# DANCER HEALTH TIPS FROM UAB SPORTS AND EXERCISE MEDICINE

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## Hypermobility in Dancers

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Joint hypermobility is the ability to move a joint beyond the normalized range of motion. This can typically be attributed to the surrounding ligaments and tendons demonstrating increased laxity or “looseness”. It can often be confused with “flexibility”. While joint hypermobility and flexibility can be seen in the same person, flexibility involves the muscles themselves. The muscles stretch to adapt to movement while maintaining a normal range of motion.

Why is hypermobility significant? It is commonly seen in dancers, and is more common in females compared to males. It can help dancers achieve the desired form and positioning during their choreography. It can be asymptomatic and not cause any problems, however joint hypermobility can also cause musculoskeletal pain and instability. Tendons and ligaments can be more vulnerable to injury with hypermobile joints, causing tendinitis or sprains. In addition, the recovery process from an injury can be longer.

When hypermobile joints are more widespread throughout the body, this is called generalized joint hypermobility. Individuals with generalized joint hypermobility can experience increased fatigue with physical activities. This is because the muscles around the hypermobile joint(s) are having to use more energy to stabilize the joint during movements. When individuals have fatigue as well as chronic musculoskeletal pain, this can negatively impact mental health.

In some cases, generalized joint hypermobility can be associated with an underlying medical condition. One prominent example is Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), which is a medical condition that affects how the body produces collagen. Collagen provides strength and structure to the skin, tendons, and ligaments.

How can you manage the negative effects of joint hypermobility? Education about hypermobility is the most important component of management. This can prevent injury as well as promote early recognition of symptoms. Physical therapy and exercise can strengthen the muscles around

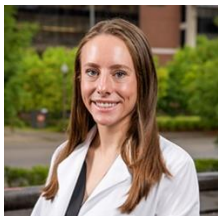
the hypermobile joints and provide better support and stability. In some cases, intermittent bracing/orthotics or pain management interventions can be helpful.

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.

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## About the Authors



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For an appointment with Dr. Colorado or anyone on the [UAB Sports and Exercise Medicine](#) team, please call us at 205-930-8339 or visit us online at [uabmedicine.org/sports](http://uabmedicine.org/sports).