

DANCER HEALTH TIPS FROM UAB SPORTS AND EXERCISE MEDICINE

The Importance of Sleep for Dancer Health

Dr. Dale Colorado

Problems with sleep are commonly reported among performing artists. Physical stress, mental stress, and traveling can put dancers at risk for poor sleep which can have a negative impact on health and well-being. A study on classical ballet dancers by Fietze et al. (2009) found that 2 months prior to a scheduled performance, sleep duration and quality was significantly reduced.

Experts recommend 7-9 hours of sleep for adults, 8-10 hours of sleep for teenagers, and 9-12 hours of sleep for children 6 to 12 years old. However, a dancer who is undergoing intense training for a competition or performance may need additional sleep for adequate recovery. In addition to its importance in general health and immune function, adequate sleep can support athletic/dance performance, prevent musculoskeletal disorders/injuries, improve focus, and improve memory and learning.

Good sleep habits or “sleep hygiene” can often prevent difficulties with sleep. This may include:

- Maintain a consistent schedule (going to bed and waking up at the same time).
- Avoid watching television or looking at phones/laptop computers in bed.
- Avoid caffeine, especially during the evening.
- Avoid exercise before bedtime.
- Maintain a dark, quiet, and relaxing environment in the bedroom
- Maintain a comfortable temperature in the bedroom

Persistent difficulties with sleep may require further evaluation and treatment by a medical provider. An underlying disorder such as obstructive sleep apnea, depression, anxiety, or restless legs syndrome may be present. While sleep difficulty is often ignored as a reason to seek medical attention, an awareness of the extensive impact of poor sleep on dancer health and performance is important for both medical providers and performing artists.

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.

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.

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.

