

## Injury Prevention

Is your dancer injury prone or protected from injury? Unfortunately there are too many cases brought to my attention of dancers with poor training from a young age resulting in injuries that will be with them for a lifetime. I've had young teenage dancers come to me with "bad knees" brought on by lack of training and weak core muscles...something totally avoidable.

Poor judgment by instructors/coaches also plays a part. A common scenario: a dancer who does not have a strong core and strong supporting muscles will be required to attempt ultra advanced moves/jumps/turns without any guidance or demonstration ending in injury.

Many times the core is completely overlooked and strength is not encouraged. Proper training includes strengthening major muscle groups. Abs, gluts, and quads are huge and are a major support system. Dancers should be doing conditioning just like an athlete. Instructors should not let dancers take a "lazy" approach if they have the desire to execute the big jumps and leaps – or any advanced dance really. Repetition and consistency are vital in the process (of course if the training is being done correctly) and an excellent, informative ballet program is key.

Dancers should not ignore any part of their body as they will come to rely on all of it. Remarkably ankles and feet are not emphasized enough. Understanding foot placement, "forced arch", how to flex and pointe properly is essential. This knowledge combined with foot strength will prevent lower leg/ankle issues. The upper body is also skipped over by many; a strong upper body is important for partnering, arm placement, chest placement and so much more. Push-ups are a great part of any warm up! Muscle stamina is something that too many teachers don't explain to dancers thus not completing their dance education.

I am constantly reminding dancers that to be a truly accomplished dancer they must respect their body and be aware of what they are asking it to do. Those amazing dance moves that people "ooh and awe" over should be learned when a dancer is prepared. They are goals that can be achieved and with the right training injury will not be king. Trying to get the glory without the hard work is not a path that will offer longevity. I want my dancers to never have to stop dancing...and of course what about being healthy and able to go for a nice long walk?

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