Dance Medicine Workshop: Nutrition for Dancers

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Objectives

- To gain overall nutritional knowledge of relationship of nutrition to dancing.
- Understand the associations of nutrition with body image, injuries and hydration and how it impacts performance.
- Learn how to put together a quick and healthy snack.
- Learn the importance of planning ahead for fueling and performance success.
Body Image and Nutrition

- **Schools of Thought**
  - Thin, lean physique = better dancer
  - Thinner doesn’t always mean better performance

- **Nutrition**
  - **Purpose**: to give you energy to successfully get through your workouts without injury and help you recover in between workouts

- **Advocates for Body Diversity and Positive Body Image**
  - Jenifer Ringer
  - Ebony Williams
  - Misty Copeland
Metabolic Demands

- A dancer can burn between 500-600 calories in a 90 minute dance session
  - How long are your dance sessions? How many sessions do you complete in a week?
  - What other types of exercise are you doing in a day?

- Dancing provides cardio as well as strength work which puts added stress on the body contributing to inflammation
  - After your dance sessions, the goal should be to decrease inflammation for proper recovery to prevent any future injury
    - What can help decrease inflammation?
Injuries and Nutrition

- Bone stress injuries are amongst the highest in runners and dancers
- Risk of developing a bone stress fracture or stress reaction is highest when body weight is low, bone density is low, caloric intake is low and exercise is high (>12hr/week)
- In one study, 46% of participants experienced a bone stress injury when all of the above risks were present
Hydration for Dancers

- Avoid losing >2% body weight lost from sweat
  - More than 2% lost can result in early fatigue, CV stress, inc risk of heat illness, and poor performance

- What do I drink and when?
  - Short duration (<60min) = water
  - Moderate to high intensity >60min = sports drinks with 6-8% carbohydrate solution i.e. Gatorade

- Eat salty foods prior if you know you’re a salty sweater

- Rehydrate enough to replenish all your sweat losses
Hydration for Dancers (cont’d)

- How can you know if you lose 2% of your body weight in sweat?
  - Weigh yourself before and after a workout
  - i.e. 120lb person loses more than 2lbs during a workout session = >2% loss of body weight

- How do you know how much is enough “to replenish sweat losses?”
  - For every pound lost, drink 16-24oz of fluid to replenish fluid
Fueling Strategies for Dancers

- What obstacles do you face when trying to eat during the day?
- What are some major barriers to eating consistently during the day?

Healthy Snacking

- Eating every 2-3 hours helps maintain energy levels
- Plan snacks ahead of time and keep them in your bag for easy access when you’re in a rush
- A winning snack includes carbohydrates and protein
  - Fruit with nut butter or handful of nuts
  - Carrots with hummus
  - Protein bar
  - Energy bites
Snack Time: Energy Bites

- These energy bites are a great way to fuel on the go and be satisfied. They are also really easy to make and can make a lot at one time. Portion them out in sandwich bags and you’ll be set for the week!

- Ingredients:
  - Nut or seed butter = healthy fats and protein
  - Oatmeal = whole grains and fiber
  - Dried fruit = antioxidant rich
  - Honey = natural sweetener that contains B vitamins
  - Dark chocolate chips = antioxidant rich
  - Flaxseed = omega 3 fatty acids (anti-inflammatory)
Practice Planning

- Let’s practice planning a day
  - Step 1: Pick a day…maybe it’s your busiest day of the week?
  - Step 2: Write down activities you do during the day in each time slot
  - Step 3: Identify times where you can fit in food
  - Step 4: Write down meals, snacks, and hydration
Conclusion

- Depending on the hours committed to dancing, metabolic demands can become very high and more food is needed to fuel and recover from workouts throughout the day.

- It is important to hydrate and eat throughout the day to maintain energy levels, properly recover and reduce risk of injury.

- Winning snacks include both carbohydrates and protein.

- Plan out your snacks and pack them with you for easy access to consistent fuel.
Questions?