



Dance Medicine Workshop: Nutrition for Dancers

By: Danielle Mach, MS, RDN, LDN, ACSM EP-C

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



DANCE



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 ($<60\text{min}$) = water
- ▶ Moderate to high intensity $>60\text{min}$ = 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?

