



## Primary Care Sports Medicine

### Nutrition 101 for Optimal Performance

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- 1. Food is Fuel:** Dancers who eat wisely will perform better. Those dancers who skimp on nutrition will "run out of gas" and perform poorly. Needs vary based on the intensity and type of activity. Needs also change based on age.
- 2. Energy Balance: The Key to Success:** The amount of energy one consumes compared to the energy one expends = energy balance. Too much in and not enough out = weight gain. More out than in = weight loss. A successful plan balances the two, unless weight loss or gain is desired. Muscle burns more calories than fat, so a strong dancer requires more calories than a less fit person who weighs the same.
- 3. Proper Nutrition Prevents Injury and Illness:** If one's intake is inadequate, the body still takes what it needs. It starts by breaking down lean muscle and fat. Immune function is also compromised. Loss of muscle results in decreased strength and endurance. This equals a decrease in performance and can also cause illness or injury.
- 4. Carbs are not evil:** Fad diets do not work for any type of athlete as they depend on carbohydrates for energy. Protein is also important, but should not take the place of healthy carbohydrates. Healthy carbs include whole grain breads, pasta and rice. Lean meats, including fish, can provide protein. Eggs and nut butters are also good. Healthy fats such as avocado, almonds and olive oil should be included as well.
- 5. Variety and Moderation:** Each meal should have a variety of colors and types of food. Include fruits and vegetables with each meal. Watch portions. Don't deprive yourself, but be reasonable with treats and processed foods.
- 6. Calcium is Essential:** You build bone until about age 30. Be sure to get at least 3-4 servings of calcium per day to ensure strong bones for life. Choose non-fat milk and low fat cheeses, yogurts, etc.
- 7. Missed Menses and other warning signs:** Missed periods can be a sign of inadequate nutrition in the female dancer. Frequent injuries, illnesses and fatigue may be other signs that nutrition is suboptimal.

**8. Hydration helps:** Dehydration impairs performance. Keep up with fluids before, during and after exercise. Urine should be light yellow. Monitor weights before and after exercise to stay on track.

**9. Plan ahead:** Keep easily digested snacks handy for before practice and performances. Do not try new foods right before an event. Good options include nuts, low-fat granola bars or trail mix and nut butter on whole grain bread. If you can't eat a healthy meal after your workout, a low fat protein shake can be helpful on occasion. Low fat chocolate milk is a great recovery drink too!

**10. Vitamins and Supplements:** If nutrition is adequate, supplementation should not be necessary. The body prefers vitamins and minerals in food form rather than pills or powders. Some exceptions include vegetarians or those with chronic disease.

**Examples of healthy snacks:**

Low fat string cheese

18-20 almonds or pistachios

Peanut butter on a small, whole grain bagel

Low-fat granola

Low-fat chocolate milk

Baked tortilla chips and salsa or homemade guacamole

Raw veggies with hummus

Fresh fruit and fat free greek yogurt

Celery and laughing cow cheese

Sliced apple and almond butter

Sliced banana with melted dark chocolate for dipping

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