



GSA Dance

Preventing Injuries: Tips for Stretching and Strengthening

Stretching:

Kneeling hip flexor stretch: Kneel with your right foot in front of you. Tuck hips under as you lean forward to feel a stretch in the front of the left hip. Repeat on both sides.



Posterior hip stretch: Lie on your back and cross left ankle over the right knee. Grab your right knee and pull towards your chest to feel a stretch in the left hip. Repeat on both sides.



Inner thigh stretch: Sit on the floor with legs spread comfortably apart. Lean forward to feel a stretch in the inner thighs.



Hamstring stretch: Lie on your back. Grasp behind the right thigh and pull your leg towards you, keeping the knee straight. Repeat on both sides.



Calf stretch: Stand in front of a wall with your left leg behind you. Lean in to the wall with your left knee straight, keeping the heel on the floor. Do this stretch with the knee bent as well. Repeat on both sides.



Strengthening:

Theraband for ankle and calf:

Plantarflexion: Wrap theraband around foot and under heel, holding both ends in your hand. Point your foot away from you, rolling through the whole foot. Do not let the toes curl. Repeat on both sides.



Dorsiflexion: Attach theraband to a stable object and wrap around top of foot. Pull toes towards you. Repeat on both sides.



Eversion: Place band around left foot, wrap underneath right foot, and hold ends of band in your hand. Pull the left foot away from the right, keeping your left knee pointing at the ceiling. Repeat on both sides.



Inversion: Cross your right ankle over the left leg. Place the theraband around your left foot, wrap underneath the right foot and hold the ends in your hand. Pull the left foot away from the right, keeping your knee pointing at the ceiling. Repeat on both sides.



Soleus: Sit in a chair. Wrap the theraband around the ball of your foot and hold ends over the top of you knee. Point foot down towards the floor without letting the toes curl. Repeat on both sides.



Towel curls: Sit or stand with foot on a towel. Press toes into floor to pull towel towards you. You should feel the muscles in your arch working. Repeat on both sides.



Turnout strengthening:

- a. **Frog heel squeeze:** Lie on stomach with heels together. Engage abdominal muscles and press heels together. Squeeze heels together for 6 seconds, repeat 15-20 times. Try to only activate the muscles “where the leotard meets the tights”, not the big gluteus maximus or low back.



- b. **2nd position leg lifts:** Lie on stomach in 2nd position. Engage stomach. Lift one leg up no more than 2-3 inches off the ground. Alternate legs, repeat 20 times.



Abdominal training:

- a. **Bent knee fall-outs:** Engage abdominal muscles, keep one knee pointing up, and let one knee fall to the side, without letting pelvis tip to one side or the other. Repeat 15-20 times each leg.



- b. **Dead bug:** Engage abdominal muscles, keeping pelvis level, tap one foot to the ground and repeat with other leg. Repeat 10 times each leg.



- c. **Heel slides:** Engage abdominal muscles, slide one heel out away from body without tipping pelvis forward or back. Alternate leg. Repeat 15-20 times each leg.



Cardiovascular endurance for dancers

Cardiovascular endurance is very important, even in dancers. Most dancers think that they do not need to have a great lung capacity but this is not true. Dancers need just as much cardiovascular endurance as other athletes.

- Cardiovascular endurance is important to aid in quicker recovery after dance combinations and/or performance pieces.
- Poor endurance = poor technique = injury!
- Cardiovascular conditioning ideas: bicycle, treadmill (fast walking, walk/jog, jogging), elliptical, swimming, cardio dance classes....find something fun to do so you will stick with it!
- 30 minutes of moderate exercise 5 times a week is recommended
- 30 minutes of intense exercises 2-3 times a week is beneficial

Fatigue is the leading cause of injuries!!! Build up your cardiovascular endurance and decrease your risk of injuries.