

Reduce Dancing Injuries

Preventing Dance Injuries, Second Edition, by Ruth L. Solomon, John Solomon, and Sandra Cerny Minton, is a terrific resource available to educators and dancers. It examines the mechanics associated with dance injuries and offers proven methods to prevent injuries.

Preventing Dance Injuries offers this advice:

Screen for common dance injuries. Ask students to complete a pre-participation exam before they enroll in your program, and request them to get a pre-participation physical from doctors that are familiar with the demanding physical requirements of the dance style you teach. A Bartenieff Fundamental Assessment is another tool to control dance injuries. It allows the teacher to work on any movement problems. Training in Bartenieff Fundamentals is available through the Laban/Bartenieff Institute for Movement Studies (www.limsonline.org), or through Certified Movement Analysts who are graduates of the program.

Diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate injuries. Make sure a medical professional diagnoses and establishes treatment plans for dance injuries. Teachers should recognize the signs and symptoms of injuries so they can take action to prevent more severe injuries from developing. Once a medical professional has treated an injury and established a rehabilitation period, ensure the dancer does not try to circumvent it.

Prevent injuries through biomechanically efficient training. Biomechanics shifts the focus from treating injuries to dealing with their causes. Teach dancers to use their bodies in a way that allows movement produced to be relatively stress free, efficient, and safe.

Promote psychological well-being. Dance instructors must practice strategies that promote psychological well-being. Helping a dancer cope with such issues as performance anxiety, gender differences, career transitions, the special needs of adolescent dancers, diet, nutrition, body image and the female athlete triad (eating disorders, menstrual irregularities, and osteoporosis) can help promote a positive psychological well-being that can have a positive influence on injury prevention. Never challenge a dancer to “tough it out” once an injury occurs. The injury may be more significant than it appears. Have students seek medical attention before they continue.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.