



# Healthy Dancer Canada

The Dance Health Alliance of Canada

## DANCE SCREENING

### Information for Dancers, Dance Educators and Health Care Professionals

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#### Definition of Dance Screening

Screening collects information about a dancer's health and wellness using both surveys and physical tests. Ideally, screening is performed *before* any pain or injury. This is the optimum time to evaluate a dancer's strengths and weaknesses, and set goals together with family members, teachers and health care professionals. Screening has become commonplace in professional dance companies and university dance programs. Organizations such as Healthy Dancer Canada, the Performing Arts Medical Association, and the International Association for Dance Medicine and Science are encouraging all dancers, including pre-professional dancers, to participate in screening.

#### Benefits of Dance Screening

- Helps dancers with goal-setting, effective and efficient dance training, injury prevention, and life-long dancing;
- Helps dance educators identify trends/strengths/weaknesses in their dancers and plan a dance-specific conditioning program;
- Creates a network of health care professionals familiar with the demands of dance;
- Provides education about dancers' health for dancers, dance educators, choreographers, rehearsal directors and healthcare providers;
- Results in collaboration between dancers, dance educators and health professionals.

#### Guidelines for Dance Screening

1. **Purpose:** To establish baseline assessments for strength, balance, ROM, coordination, cardiovascular endurance, biomechanical efficiency of dance specific movement, nutritional and psychological status.
2. **Timing:** Dance screening should occur at the start of the dance year. There should be an evaluation of progress, so screening should occur at regular intervals throughout the dancer's academic and performing career. For adolescent dancers, it may be useful to have ongoing screenings or assessments in order to monitor growth and physical changes.
3. **Administration:** Professionals conducting the screen may include doctors, physiotherapists, exercise physiologists, psychologists, athletic therapists, dietitians, movement science researchers, and dance educators. The physical examination should be conducted by

professionals trained in assessing health history, ROM, strength, biomechanical analysis, body weight/BMI, psychological and nutritional questionnaires.

4. **Confidentiality:** The data collected during screening belongs to the dancer, and it should be discussed whether they wish to share screening information with their family members, dance teacher, health care provider, etc.
5. **Communication:** With the dancer's consent, it is recommended that the information collected be shared with their family physician or health care team. The screening contains sensitive material (eg. history of stress fractures, weight/BMI), and may identify "red flags" relevant to the dancer's long term health and wellness.
6. **Follow-up:** The screening is not an end in itself. Analysis of the data should be conducted and a personalized summary or profile for each dancer should be provided and sensitively communicated with the dancer.

## Components of Dance Screening

### 1. *Medical*

- a. general health screenings
- b. medical history, diagnosis, treatment
- c. anthropometric measures/growth
- d. structural abnormalities

### 2. *Musculoskeletal (includes injury history)*

- a. physical assessment
- b. static alignment
- c. range of motion (hyper-mobility: Beighton score)
- d. strength
- e. muscular imbalances
- f. functional asymmetries

### 3. *Fitness*

- a. cardio-respiratory response
- b. BMI

### 4. *Technical Dance Skills (includes dance training history)*

- a. fundamental motor skills
- b. dynamic alignment
- c. core stability
- d. dance technique specific to form

### 5. *Psychological*

- a. questionnaires, surveys and interviews covering performance anxieties, self-esteem, depression

### 6. *Nutrition*

- a. questionnaires and surveys on food, diet and eating habits

## References

1. Dance Task Force USA. Post-Hire Health Screen for Professional Dancers. Available at: [www.danceusa.org/tfodh-screening-project-health-care-providers](http://www.danceusa.org/tfodh-screening-project-health-care-providers). 2005.

2. International Association for Dance Medicine and Science. Screening in a Dance Wellness Program. Available at: [www.iadms.org](http://www.iadms.org). Revised 2008.
3. Healthy Dancer Canada Dancer Screening Committee. Survey on the patterns of dance screening in Canada. Available at: [www.healthydancercanada.org](http://www.healthydancercanada.org). 2012.