

Eating Well for Dance

Dance requires a lot of strength, but also quite a bit of endurance. Since a dancer is practicing or performing for several hours in a row, carbohydrates are essential for energy.

- Our bodies do not store very much carbohydrate
- Studies show that athletes who perform high intensity activities like dance can perform better if a sports drink, such as Gatorade, is used during breaks
- Dancers should eat a wide variety of foods that provide a balance of nutrients

What should a dancer eat?

Focus should be on carbohydrate-rich foods for energy

- Breads, cereals, fruits, vegetables, legumes, pasta, potatoes, tortillas, rice

Protein is also necessary to build and repair muscles

- meats, soy, milk, cheese, yogurt, legumes

Fats carry important vitamins

- Oils, margarine, foods with fat naturally in them

Note: Limit intake of fried foods, high fat dairy products and high fat prepared meats (hot dogs, salami, bologna, etc)

Tip for Dancers

Stop Dieting

- Do not skip meals
- May limit normal growth and weight gain
- Chronic dieting will lower metabolism, or rate at which energy is used
- Dieting can contribute to a loss of muscle and increase in body fat
- Severe dieting reduces athletic performance and puts dancer at risk of health problems

Think about food as fuel

- What am I getting out of this food that is going to help me?
- Carbohydrates for energy, protein for muscle, various vitamins and minerals for health and performance

How to eat

Make fuel available when you need it

- Many dancers eat too little prior to practice
- Fill your "gas tank" before you go

Eat small but frequent meals and snacks *every 3 hours*

Ideal schedule:

- Breakfast, small snack, lunch, small snack, dinner, small snack

Do I need a vitamin or other supplement?

- A multivitamin is not necessary if you are eating a healthy, well-balanced diet with enough calories
- A regular potency multivitamin is safe to take every day or every other day

Are nutrition bars (like Luna, Balance, Clif, etc) OK to eat?

- Yes, nutrition bars can be a tasty and convenient snack or part of a meal
- Do not "live" off of bars
- Limit to one per day in addition to other foods

What to eat for practice and competition

√ Pre-practice/Competition

- ☺ Small high-carbohydrate snack about one hour prior to practice or competition
- ☺ Drink water or sports drink prior to training
- ☺ Frequent drinking is good for maintaining performance

√ During practice/Competition

- ☺ Develop habit of drinking 4-6 oz of sports drink every 10-15 minutes during heavy practice or competition
- ☺ This will meet carbohydrate and fluid requirements

√ Post Practice/Competition

- ☺ High carbohydrate snack (crackers, bread, banana, energy bar, etc.) immediately following practice or competition
- ☺ This will help to replace carbohydrate in the muscles so they are ready to go the next day
- ☺ Drink plenty of fluids