

MONTHLY TIPS FROM UPMC SPORTS MEDICINE #3: HYPERMOBILITY

Dancers require a high degree of joint mobility to perform in their sport, which sometimes results in hypermobility. Hypermobility features joints that easily move beyond a normal range of motion. With this need for heightened mobility comes the need for great stabilization through strength.

Hypermobility can be present in just one or two joints, which is most often due to structural or bony differences. But, when hypermobility is more widespread, it may be caused by structurally deficient collagen proteins in the tissues that surround the joints.

Contrary to popular belief, hypermobility may not always be a “bad thing”. Hypermobility is often required to execute the demands of dance, including the aesthetic lines of classical ballet. Extreme cases of hypermobility, however, can cause pain and other issues, both short and long term. These issues may include the following:

- Bruising
- Chronic overuse injuries, such as tendonitis
- Difficulty maintaining neutral or proper postures
- Early onset of arthritis in other joints
- Fatigue
- Feeling that joints are “out of place”
- Joint subluxation and dislocation
- Pain
- Poor proprioception (awareness of where your body and joints are in space)
- Slow tissue healing

If you believe you have hypermobility, you may consider the following:

- See a licensed healthcare provider. A physical therapist can perform a thorough evaluation of your muscles, joints, and other body systems to determine if your hypermobility is severe.
- A physical therapist can provide an exercise program to address postural issues, correct muscle imbalances, train core musculature, teach self-corrections, and work on proprioception and balance.
- A physical therapist may also use taping, bracing, or compression garments for class and rehearsal to help your body improve more quickly and to protect your joints while you retrain them.
- If you have more severe symptoms, a physical therapist can help you find the appropriate physician to perform additional testing. Some symptoms of hypermobility syndrome or Ehlers-Danlos syndrome may require medications or ongoing medical management.

To schedule an appointment, or to learn more about UPMC Sports Medicine, visit UPMCSportsMedicine.com or call 1-855-93-SPORT (77678).

Check in next month for more dance health tips from UPMC Sports Medicine.

