

HEALTHY TIPS FOR DANCE ATHLETES FROM THABO



The Principles of Healthy Living for DanceSport athletes by Thabo Phiri

Health has been defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.

Dancesport athletes are concerned with achieving optimum health and quality of life by focusing on those aspects of lifestyles, which integrate mind, body and spirit.

Vital Important aspects of health are:

- Correct nutrition,
- Physical exercise,
- Weight control,
- Sleep and relaxation,
- A positive attitude to life

Physical fitness is associated with mental fitness and the ability to tolerate and cope with stress. Good nutrition is also essential for both physical and mental health.

Athletes who follow a regular exercise program and consume a high fibre low fat diet with very little coffee (or none at all), tea and alcohol will be able to handle competition pressure and stress much better than those who indulge in heavy meals, junk food, and an over consumption of coffee and tea, alcohol and who smoke and does not exercise.

Diet

The role of the diet in the training programme should not be underestimated. A poor diet can have a bad impact on the dancer's performance. Below are guidelines as to how the athlete's diet should be structured. The percentages refer to the total energy consumed and not the weight.

- Carbohydrate 65-70%
- Protein 20-25%
- Fat 10%
- The energy values of foods can be estimated by using the following table:
- **1 Gram Carbohydrate = 4.1 Kcal**
- **1 Gram Protein = 4.3 Kcal**
- **1 Gram Fat = 9.3 Kcal**

Wherever possible Complex Carbohydrates such as rice and potatoes should be eaten in preference to Simple Carbohydrates that are forms of sugar.

Hydration is also an essential aspect of the overall programme. Even a small amount of dehydration can result in impaired performance.

Benefits: When you eat a properly balanced diet:

- More energy
- Maintain healthy body weight
- Lower risk of heart disease, cancer

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Summary for a healthy diet:

- Eat three meals a day. Never miss breakfast.
- Eat plenty of plant – salads, vegetables and fruits, preferably raw.
- Reduce fat intake, avoid fried and roasted foods, ice cream, cream and mayonnaise.
- Choose complex carbohydrates such as potatoes, brown rice, sweet corn, pasta and wholegrain breads, instead of white bread, cakes, cookies and biscuits.
- Use legumes such as beans, lentils and split peas as an alternative source of protein and fibre.
- Select low fat varieties of dairy products such as skim milk and cottage cheese.
- Reduce salt, sugar and caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Drink plenty of water, approximately 6-8 glasses a day it is recommended the athlete should drink approximately 2 litres of water per day.
- For weight control, try a fruit only day once a week for detoxification and flushing of the system.

TIP:

When you eat fewer calories than you use, your body uses the stored calories and you lose weight. When you eat the same amount of calories as your body uses, your weight stays the same. Any type of physical activity you choose to do such as running or aerobic dancing or moderate-intensity activities such as walking or household work will increase the number of calories your body uses. The key to successful weight control and improved overall health is making physical activity a part of your daily routine such as road running and exercising.