



HEALTH & FITNESS • 9

Weekend Doctor

By Dr. Thomas F. Vail

If you plan to be light on your feet at the Feb. 27 Day of Dance in Findlay, remember to be careful.

Amateur and professional dancers can suffer foot injuries that can stop the show, as witnessed on the popular television show "Dancing with the Stars."

More than 50 percent of dance injuries occur in the foot and ankle.

The severity of the damage is determined by your age, strength, flexibility and the type of shoes worn when dancing.

The most common types of problems are overuse injuries, which occur due to the repetitive movements in dance.

There are several other common types of injuries related to dancing.

Stress fractures, or hairline breaks in the bone, can occur from repeated jumping and landing.

Special taping techniques performed by a podiatrist can help prevent these types of injuries.

Foot neuromas, also known as the thickening or irritation of nerves in the ball of the foot, result from repetitive pivoting.

Pressure from poorly fitting shoes or an abnormal bone structure can also lead to this condition.

Symptoms may include sensations of thickness, burning, numbness, tingling, or pain in the ball of the foot.

Shin splints, or pain and swelling in the front of the lower legs, can be aggravated by recurring activities.

The problem is usually related to a collapsing arch but may be caused by a muscle imbalance between opposing muscle groups in the leg.

Proper stretching before and after exercise and sports, corrective shoes, or orthotics, also known as corrective shoe inserts, can help prevent shin splints.

Tendonitis, or inflammation of the tendons in the foot, can result from overexertion.

A common overuse injury, Achilles tendonitis, often begins with mild pain after exercise or running that gradually worsens.

Morning tenderness about 1.5 inches above the point where the Achilles tendon is attached to the heel bone is common.

Corns, calluses or blisters are all painful skin irritations resulting from repeated rubbing of the skin on the feet.

Special over-the-counter, non-medicated, donut-shaped foam pads can be worn to relieve the pressure and discomfort.

Since dancing is repetitive and hard on the lower extremities, how can dancers protect their feet and ankles at Day of Dance and the days afterward?

The best defense is prevention.

Dancers should wear shoes that properly support their feet and ankles.

A properly fitted and supportive shoe, combined with an accommodative shoe insert, can put your feet in balance and improve your body alignment.

In addition, dancers should remember their individual skill level when performing dance moves. Don't overdo it!

If an injury does occur, prompt medical attention by a foot and ankle surgeon can make all the difference in a proper rehabilitation.

Most dance injuries can be treated with conservative care as long as they are addressed early and not ignored.

Many people try to ignore foot pain if they can walk on the foot, but remember that it is possible to walk on a seriously injured foot. If left untreated, even common injuries may require surgical intervention to ensure proper healing.

If you are suffering from foot or ankle pain, contact your podiatrist for an assessment.



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