

STRETCHING

HOW, WHAT, WHEN AND WHY?



Kinetica
Physiotherapy

At Kinetica Physiotherapy we see many dancers who desire better flexibility.

Dancers need a high level of flexibility to perform at their best. Stretching in order to improve flexibility is usually a component of every dance class. But while flexibility comes naturally to some, many dancers end up frustrated that hours of stretching don't seem to be paying off as much as they would like.

Here's the excellent news: while some dancers may always have to work a little harder than others to improve flexibility, there are some tricks to getting the most out of your stretching program.

Let us share these with you.



For boys:

Working your muscles in a lengthened position will ensure that flexibility is maintained while also building strength. This should be a critical part of any strengthening program.



KINETICAPHYSIO.COM.AU

PERFORM. ACTIVATE. CREATE

4

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. TIMING

2. TYPE

3. HOW MUCH?

4. WARM DOWN

BE CAREFUL OF GROWTH SPURTS

While we expect our muscles to become more flexible with the below guidelines, keep in mind that muscles are likely to tighten slightly during growth spurts as they struggle to keep up with lengthening bones. You can persist with stretches during growth spurts so long as it isn't painful. Take heart, eventually your muscles will catch up.



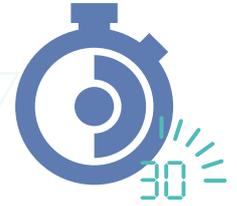
Kinetica
Physiotherapy
Dedicated
to dancers

THE 4

KEY POINTS OF STRETCHING

1. TIMING

Warm up before class, & stretch down after class!



Stretching to increase flexibility is best done at the end of your class, when your body is warm and muscles respond beautifully to all that extra circulation you have pumping through your limbs.

2. TYPE

Incorporate contraction and relaxation phases to achieve a true increase in muscle length.

Dancers should take the muscle to a point where they feel strain (not pain), then contract that muscle against resistance for several seconds. Relaxing the muscle should then allow the limb to be moved further into stretch. Repeat at least 3x for best results



Research has shown that it is actually the contraction phase that adds to lasting changes in muscle length¹.

With the right type of stretching, dancers should see improvements in flexibility within 4 weeks.

3. HOW MUCH?

A recent study showed that **3 sets of 30 second stretches, 5 days per week for 4 weeks** resulted in an average 21% improvement in hamstring extensibility²

That amount of stretching should be more than achievable for most dancers!

4. WARM DOWN AFTER CLASS

Allow the body to cool down slowly with an active warm down, which has also been shown to decrease the risk of injury, and improve recovery³.

Try 5-10 mins of reduced tempo class work or 5 mins of light barre exercise.

Don't forget to rug up in winter when leaving class. With colder nights, it's important to allow those tired muscles to cool gradually.



References

1. Aquino, C., Fonseca, S., Goncalves, G., Silva, P., Ocarino, J., & Mancini, M. (2010). Stretching vs. strength training in lengthened position in subjects with tight hamstring muscles: A randomised control trial. *Manual Therapy*, 15, 26-31
2. Marshall, P., Cashman, A., & Cheema, B. (2011). A randomised controlled trial for the effect of passive stretching on measures of hamstring extensibility, passive stiffness, strength, and stretch tolerance. *J Sci & Med in Sport*, 14, 535-540
3. Reilly, B., & Ekblom, T. (2005). The use of recovery methods post exercise. *J of Sports Sciences*, 23 (6), 619-627