

## **DANCE CLASS WARM-UP SUGGESTIONS**

*Our classes generally begin with a dance with little or no setting to avoid stress on joints and muscles before we are fully warmed up.*

*In addition, Janet Cook, our former instructor, has prepared this suggested warm-up plan for members to undertake on arrival, before they start dancing, if they feel this would be helpful.*

### **Suggested warm up plan**

**Start with gentle movements:** Loosen up the leg joints by rotating ankles – swing legs to get knees mobile – rise up onto balls of feet and then lower to get the whole foot mobile – gentle pliés.

There are lots of ways to warm up the muscles ready for dancing. Walking skipping or just walking through and then gently dance through the first dance, after loosening up your joints. You do not want to make any sudden moves while warming up.

Do not stretch muscle until they are warmed up. You can damage muscles if stretch before warming up but you do need to stretch before dancing full out. Hold for short time.

**Suggested cool down** - after dancing the stretches should be repeated and held until you feel comfortable.

Do listen to you own body. Stretches must be held and not bounced. Hold stretch for a shorter time before dancing and longer after dancing.

**Do not do any exercises or stretch if you feel pain.**

**Always check with your Doctor if the pain last more than 24 hours**



#### **Quad stretch – hold for 6 to 10 seconds**

To do a quad stretch, grasp your ankle and gently pull your heel up and back until you feel a stretch in the front of your thigh. Stand tall, keep knees together and avoid leaning to the side. *Keep a slight bend* in the supporting leg. *Use a wall for support.* Repeat with other leg.

#### **Hamstring stretch – hold for 6 to 10 seconds**

To do a hamstring stretch, keep hips and shoulders straight, extend one leg out, foot facing up. Bend forwards until you feel a stretch in your hamstring. Repeat with other leg.



#### **Calf stretch – hold for 6 to 10 seconds**

To do a calf stretch, step your right leg forward, keeping it bent and lean forwards slightly. Keep your left straight and try to lower the left heel to the ground. Repeat with other leg. Keep feet straight *do not turn out.*



**Achilles stretch** position as calf stretch but bring rear foot slightly and bend rear knee (keeping it over the toes) floor keep heel pressed into the ground.

Sorry no picture.

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## Additional information for Warm-up and Cool down

Before dancing, warm up with light activity and stretching. Warm-ups increase blood and oxygen supply to the muscles, raise body temperature, relax muscles, increase coordination and prepare you to move.

1. Joint rotation facilitates motion by spreading synovial fluid to lubricate joints. Rotate toes, ankles, knees, legs, trunk/waist, neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers and knuckles. [*Anselm says: Be careful about joint rotations and do take into account the way the joints are designed. For instance, you can rotate your ankle laterally but not your knee – it only goes backwards and forwards, which incidentally is why SCD teachers keep harping on you to turn out your legs »from the hip«.* Be *extra* careful about neck rotations. If in any doubt whatsoever, get a suitable professional to give you advice on what works and what to stay away from.]
2. Walk or move to raise muscle temperature and increase blood circulation before trying to stretch. If the weather is very cold, or if you are feeling very stiff, take extra care to warm up before you stretch.
3. Do slow, gentle stretches (no bouncing). Tense and relax muscles, then stretch again. Be sure to include arches, calves, and thighs in your stretching. Also stretch your torso, arms and hands. Work the tension out of your shoulders. Stretch gently and hold for 15-20 seconds; if it hurts, back off a little. While stretching, take slow, relaxed breaths from the abdomen, this improves circulation and helps relax your muscles and your mind.
4. End warm-ups with some gentle skip change and pas-de-Basque to get your feet, legs and mind into the swing of dancing. Gently move to the rhythm of the music, without trying for great extension or flight.

## Cool Down

After dancing, cool down. Light exercise reduces tightness, cramping and soreness of fatigued muscles and may make you feel better. The cool-down is similar to the second part of the warm up, but in reverse.

1. Gentle dance-type movements. Like the last part of the warm ups, do gentle skip-change, or walk for 5 to 10 minutes after dancing.
2. Relaxed stretching, as in the warm ups. Stretch each body part, giving special attention to ones used in dancing. Assume a position and hold it with another part of the body for 15-20 seconds.

If you are still sore the next day, doing some light exercise and stretching may help.

# Dance Properly

Good dancing habits go a long way toward preventing injuries. Make the following suggestions an automatic part of your dancing:

- Maintain control of your body. Keep your centre of mass over your feet, especially when turning or circling. Shoulders over hips, hips over knees, over ankles will help maintain balance, which not only prevents injuries and falls, but is also less fatiguing and presents a better form to the viewer.
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- Maintain good posture
- Avoid rigid muscles. Use your arches, bent knee and leg muscles to land gently and absorb impact - especially for pas-de-Basque.
- Use good handing. When turning by one hand, point elbow down and maintain firm muscles. Floppy arms can result in injury to the shoulder/arm. If you lose your balance, good arms can help keep you from falling. Avoid »thumb« injuries by not grasping your partner's hand with your thumb. Cup your hand and »glue« your thumb to the inside edge of your hand.
- Turn out from the hip, not from the knee, to prevent knee problems.
- Don't dance if you know you are tired.
- Do not attempt movements beyond your ability. Strive to improve technique, but be aware of your body's limitations - if it hurts, back off a bit. Dancing involves movements and muscles that you may not have used much, so work into it gradually. If you can't do a 90° turnout, settle for 80. If your feet won't take a full pas-de-Basque, cut down on the height, while maintaining the rhythm.
- Be sure your shoes fit snugly, but not tight. Wear cushioned insoles to help absorb impact when landing. If your shoes are too slippery, spray the soles with non-skid, apply rosin, or roughen the sole by scraping it with a knife or rubbing it against a rough surface, such as cement. Moistening the sole with a damp towel can also temporarily keep you from slipping.