

## ADOLESCENT DANCER

### WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS?

- The adolescent growth spurt occurs at a time when the intensity of dance training increases and also when dancers decide their career paths.
- There are immense changes in the physical, psychological, and social aspects of your life.
- For female dancers, there is an increase in height and decrease in muscle strength and coordination. For male dancers there is also an increase in height, but the muscle strength increases.
- Nutritional needs will change as the amount of calories you must consume is greater.
- Training modifications need to be made to adapt to all these physical changes.
- Instructors, parents and dancers need to be aware that these changes are a normal part of development to avoid frustration.

### PHYSICAL CHANGES

- Dancers will notice an increase in height, in body mass, in limb length, and in females; widening of the hips that may alter their center of gravity.
- There are changes in coordination as the nervous system struggles to keep up with the changes in the bone and muscle.
- As the bones tend to grow faster than the muscles, there may be losses in flexibility and strength.
- Growth plates are vulnerable to injury at this time as the tendons and ligaments may put more stress on the bones.
- The physical changes can impair proper technique which places the dancer at a higher risk for injury.

### PSYCHO-SOCIAL ISSUES

- Dancers perceive a decreased ability due to their physical changes, that combined along with hormonal fluctuations make them feel overwhelmed.
- Dancers may lose confidence and self esteem since they can no longer perform at previous levels.
- Changes in body shape may lead to poor self image.
- It is important to recognize the changes and to realize that performance level will return as the dancer adjusts to these physical changes.
- It is also important to realize that the changes occur over a period of time and, so similar performance readjustments will take some time, usually over the course of a year.



### NUTRITION

- This is the optimal time to ensure that healthy eating habits are being developed.
- Decreased energy consumption can lead to poor bone density and dysfunctions in the menstrual cycle in female dancers. This is known as the Female Athlete Triad (decreased energy stores, osteopenia, and disordered menstrual cycles)
- This is the optimal time to build bone density, yet many dancers lose bone density which will lead to osteoporosis and fractures.
- Once a menstrual cycle has been established (1-2 years after the first cycle) it is not normal to have irregular menstrual cycles.

### TRAINING MODIFICATIONS

- Typically, impact work such as jumps, centre point work on one leg, and challenging partner lifts are difficult to master at this transition stage.
- Areas that can effectively be emphasized include trunk and pelvis stabilization, proprioceptive work, balance training, and overall body conditioning.

### TAKING CARE OF THE WHOLE DANCER

- Optimally, the dancer will have access to a variety of resources especially at this transition phase.
- The instructor is the main source of advice and plays a critical role in helping the dancer to transition.
- Parents provide strong support for the dancer as they transition.
- A therapist may be beneficial if there are imbalances in flexibility or strength.
- A nutritionist may be of service to those who have dietary concerns.

### KAPI'OLANI SPORTS & DANCE MEDICINE PROGRAM

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