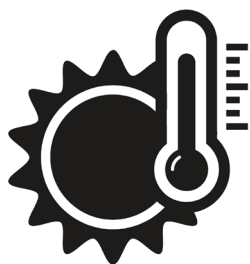


Keeping Cool: A Guide for Dancers

Heat, Hydration & Your Health

Dancing generates a lot of body heat. In warm environments, or during intense activity, your body can struggle to cool down — which can affect your performance and put your health at risk. This guide explains what to watch for and how to stay safe.

WHY HEAT MATTERS FOR DANCERS



When you dance, your muscles generate heat. Your body cools itself mainly by sweating — when sweat evaporates from your skin, it carries heat away with it.

If you can't cool down fast enough — because it's too hot, too humid, or you're not drinking enough — your core body temperature rises, and heat illness can follow.

Dehydration begins to affect your performance when you lose as little as 1–2% of your body weight in fluids.

Losing more than 3% can lead to cramps, nausea, dizziness, and fainting, and increases your risk of serious heat illness.

Dance spaces should ideally be kept at around **21°C**, and where temperatures are above **24°C** measures need to be taken to protect the health and safety of dancers. Warm environments increase dehydration due to sweat loss significantly.

Summary of outside temperature risks for those engaged in active exertion.

Category	Heat Index	Possible Heat Disorders for People in High Risk Groups
Extreme Danger	130°F (54°C) or higher	Heat stroke or sunstroke likely.
Danger	105 - 129° F (41 - 54° C)	Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustion likely. Heat stroke possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.
Extreme Caution	90 - 105°F (32 - 41°C)	Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustion possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.
Caution	80 - 90°F (27-32°C)	Fatigue possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.

Source: Dance/USA Taskforce on Dancer Health — Heat Illness and Dehydration — https://danceusa.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/page_uploads/Heat%20Illness.pdf

Source: IADMS Nutrition Resource Paper — <https://iadms.org/media/3589/iadms-resource-paper-nutrition-resource-paper.pdf>

Source: One Dance UK Industry Standards — <https://www.onedanceuk.org/programmes/industry-standards>

RECOGNISING HEAT ILLNESS

Heat illness exists on a spectrum. Learn to spot the signs early — in yourself and others.

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is serious but can be treated without emergency services if caught early.



Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion

- Tiredness, weakness, or fatigue
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Headache
- Feeling or being sick (nausea/vomiting)
- Heavy sweating — skin may look pale and clammy
- Muscle cramps (arms, legs, stomach)
- High temperature
- Extreme thirst
- Feeling irritable

NOTE: The symptoms of heat exhaustion are often the same in adults and children.

Heatstroke

Heatstroke is a medical emergency. Call 999 immediately.



Symptoms of Heatstroke — Call 999 Now

- Very high body temperature
- Hot skin that is NOT sweating (may look red)
- Fast breathing and fast heartbeat
- Confusion, disorientation, or restlessness
- Seizure or fit
- Loss of consciousness

Source: NHS — Heat Exhaustion and Heatstroke — <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/>

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE HAS HEAT EXHAUSTION

Act quickly. Follow these four steps:

1. Move them to a cool place — shade, air conditioning, or a cool room.

2. Remove unnecessary clothing (jackets, socks, extra layers).

3. Give them plenty of water or an isotonic sports drink to replace fluids and salts.

4. Cool their skin — spray or sponge with cool water, fan them, or apply cold packs wrapped in cloth to the neck, armpits, or groin.

Stay with them. They should feel better within 30 minutes.



CALL 999 IF:

- Still unwell after 30 minutes
- Hot skin that is not sweating
- Fast heartbeat or fast breathing
- Confusion or loss of coordination
- Seizure or loss of consciousness

Do not drive yourself to A&E.

Get help from NHS 111 (call or online at 111.nhs.uk) if you have heat exhaustion symptoms you're struggling to treat.

Source: NHS — Heat Exhaustion and Heatstroke — <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/>

STAYING HYDRATED

Water is one of the most important performance nutrients for dancers. The more energy you expend, the more fluid you need — and dance environments are often kept warm, which increases sweat loss further.

A typical dancer can lose 0.5–1.5 litres of fluid per hour during moderate exercise. With back-to-back classes, this adds up quickly.

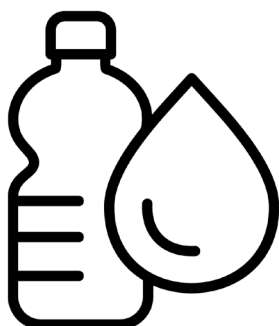
Check your urine colour

Pale, straw-coloured urine = well hydrated. Dark yellow or amber = drink more. Monitor this between performances and classes to avoid cumulative dehydration over the day.

Note: B vitamin supplements can make urine appear more yellow — factor this in.

Quick self-test

Drink 400–600ml of water two hours before dancing and check your urine output over the next hour. This gives you a useful baseline.



Hydration Tips for Dancers

- Drink little and often throughout the day — don't wait until you're thirsty.
- Keep a refillable water bottle with you at all times.
- Water is the best replacement for sweat — it's quickly absorbed and easy to obtain.
- In very hot conditions or intense sessions, use an isotonic sports drink to replace electrolytes (sodium, potassium, magnesium).
- Don't restrict fluids during class or rehearsal.
- Wear breathable, appropriate clothing — extra layers increase sweat loss.

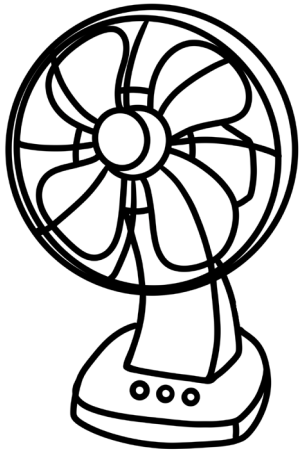
Proper Hydration in Athletes & Performers

Before Rehearsal/Performance	During Rehearsal/Performance	After Rehearsal/Performance
7.5-15 oz. of cool fluid, 4 hours prior. (5-7ml/kg body weight)	-Drink 6-8 oz. of cool fluid for every ½ hour of activity.	Drink at least 20 oz. of cool fluid for every pound of body weight lost during activity.
6-10 oz. of cool fluid, 20 min prior. (3-5ml/kg body weight)	-Amount of fluid intake should equal or exceed sweat and urine loss.	Fluid intake should occur within 2 hours of activity.

Source: IADMS Nutrition Resource Paper — Fluid, Hydration, and Sweat — <https://iadms.org/media/3589/iadms-resource-paper-nutrition-resource-paper.pdf>

Source: Dance/USA Taskforce on Dancer Health — https://danceusa.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/page_uploads/Heat%20illness.pdf

REDUCING YOUR RISK OF HEAT ILLNESS



Practical Steps

- Know the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heatstroke.
- Monitor the temperature of your dance space — aim for around 21°C.
- Take more frequent breaks in hot conditions.
- Use fans or air conditioning where available.
- Wear clothing appropriate for the heat.
- Use ice packs or cold baths for active cooling if needed.
- Always warm up and cool down properly — even in warm environments.
- Acclimatise gradually if moving into hotter conditions.

Source: Dance/USA Taskforce on Dancer Health — https://danceusa.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/page_uploads/Heat%20illness.pdf

FURTHER RESOURCES

- NHS — How to cope in hot weather: www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/heatwave-how-to-cope-in-hot-weather/
- Health and Safety Executive — Heat stress guidance: www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/heat-stress.htm
- Equity — Working during a heatwave in theatres and outdoor spaces: www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/health-and-safety/working-in-a-heatwave-or-high-temperatures
- One Dance UK Industry Standards (working environment temperatures): www.onedanceuk.org/programmes/industry-standards