

# DANCE | U S A

The National Service Organization for Professional Dance  
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## PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **NEW MEDICAL FINDS RESULT IN PREVENTIVE HEALTH SCREEN TO HELP PROFESSIONAL DANCERS AVOID INJURY.**

**Washington, DC** – From “The Red Shoes” to “Dancing with the Stars,” the injured dancer can provide a dramatic moment. In truth, injury can mean the end of a promising career built on years of dedication and training. But what if injuries might be predicted, or even prevented? **Dance/USA**, the national service organization for professional dance announces a standardized **DANCER HEALTH SCREENING PROTOCOL** for all dance companies that should help prevent injuries and bring overall better health to professional dancers. The protocol was developed by the **Dance/USA Task Force on Dancer Health**, composed of the medical personnel from member companies of Dance/USA.

This historic effort marks the first time in which companies from across the continent, in cooperation with the dancers’ union, have worked together to bring better health to those who dance for a living. It is a project where all parties (the companies, the dancers, the medical personnel and the union) are working side-by-side for the benefit of all.

#### **THE ANNUAL POST-HIRE HEALTH SCREEN: WHAT’S AT STAKE**

In addition to helping individual dancers, an annual health screening of professional dancers has enormous potential to provide outcomes that benefit dance companies and the art form in general. Among the benefits are:

- **Reducing the Heavy Financial Burden of Injury**  
Reducing injury and improving the health of professional dancers is a “win-win” situation for all parties. It permits more funds to go toward salaries, benefits, and artistic productions rather than the spiraling costs of injury care.
- **Standardization**  
Use of a standardized screening protocol by all North American companies, in addition to a standardized system of reporting injury, will provide an invaluable pool of nameless data that can increase our general knowledge of injury and illness in dance.

At the request of the Managers Council of Dance/USA, the Taskforce created a Preventive Health Screen in 2005, designed specifically for the unique needs of professional companies. The Screen focuses on the “whole” dancer, looking at physical, emotional, nutritional, and general medical issues. After a successful “Pilot Year” by four eminent companies, the Taskforce Screen has been adopted by an increasing number of companies as the benefits of a preventive approach to dancer health become apparent. In the current season, there are 22 companies using the Screen.

***More>>>***

## Dance/USA Dancer Health Screening – 2-2-2-2

### Injury Prevention

**The Primary Purposes** of why all dancers should be screened are:

- To detect potentially life-threatening or disabling medical or musculoskeletal conditions that may limit a dancer's safe participation
- To detect medical or musculoskeletal conditions that may predispose dancers to injury and /or illness during their season

**The Secondary Purposes** of why the screening is **essential** are to:

- Determine the general health of the dancers
- Assess the fitness level of the dancers
- Counsel the dancers by creating intervention recommendations based on the screening information
- Utilize a standardized screening tool and associated protocols to assess dancer health

### Benefits of Standardization

The decision to create one standardized protocol for all companies is based on the premise that there are basic principles of functional movement common to all dancers. Likewise, there are basic aspects of general health, emotional status, and nutrition that are common to all people, and problems in these areas may increase the dancer's risk of injury and ill health. Where a specific type of company differs in the style of their work, additional assessments are encouraged. In no way do additional tests prevent pooling of the basic standardized data.

The following are only some of the ways that such data can be used:

- Establishing normative data on body types and physiologic variants for different forms of dance, thereby having the information to:
  - Develop parameters that guide young dancers.
  - Develop strategies for preventing and treating injury.
- Recognizing patterns of injury in regard to variables such as:
  - length of season
  - timing within the season
  - type of repertoire
  - type of flooring

The Taskforce on Dancer Health meets periodically to assess the Screen and search for expanded ways in which this preventive approach can benefit professional dancers and the professional companies.



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For further information on the Dance/USA Taskforce on Dancer Health, please contact the Taskforce Chair: [Richard Gibbs](#), MD  
Chair, Dance/USA Taskforce on Dancer Health  
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In support of its mission to advance the art form of dance, Dance/USA is grounded in the conviction that the concerns and aspirations of dance artists and institutions can be addressed effectively through active, cooperative endeavors with its membership, the broader dance field, and with other performing arts disciplines. Since its founding in 1982, Dance/USA has evolved to become the sole national service organization representing the great diversity of organizations and dance genres that exist in the field. Membership today includes almost 400 ballet, modern, ethnic, jazz and tap companies, dance service and presenting organizations, artist managers, educational institutions, business affiliates and individuals, both nationwide and international. Core programs and services consist of **Public Communications** in the form of publications, and web, email and media communications; **Advocacy** on Capitol Hill in support of federal policies designed to strengthen arts organizations and individual artists, in the media to represent a unified voice for the field, and in the philanthropic community to articulate the field's needs; **Research and Information Services** in the form of statistical information on professional dance through data research and needs assessments; **Professional Development** workshops, training seminars and annual meetings; and **Special Projects**.