

Dance / USA

Task Force on Dancer Health

Staying Healthy on Tour

Although performing is a very rewarding job, it can also be quite stressful. When touring stress is added, it can place a performer at risk for illness. The goal of this paper is to provide practical tools to help mitigate tour stresses and decrease illness risk while performing on the road.

MEDICAL NEEDS

Vaccines

When traveling out of the US, the [CDC](#) has a link to see what vaccines/immunizations may be recommended/required. Simply look up where your tour is going and what vaccinations are listed so that you can plan ahead of time and then make an appointment with your MD/health care clinic to see which vaccines are appropriate for you.

Medication

If you have a reoccurring medical condition (asthma, allergies, ulcers, headaches, etc.), bring the medications you might need in the event you experience an episode of your medical condition. Here are some steps to take prior to leaving on tour:

- See your primary care physician and obtain the prescription medications and pain relievers you could require.
- Talk with your doctor about the best way to ensure there is no gap in your medication for the length of the tour (birth control, medications for mental health, prescriptions for management of chronic conditions)
- If using non-prescription means of birth control, be sure to maintain adequate access to these methods.
- Bring an EPI pen if you have allergies that might require this treatment.
- Don't forget dental care: do not go on tour with any untreated dental problems.

Inform your medical staff of your medications, allergies, health needs, and past medical history prior to leaving.

Emergency care:

Ensure you know what company policies are and if company management has any recommendations of healthcare providers in the area you're visiting. Often, these can be found in your tour packet/city sheet.

Other helpful tips to avoid illness

- Always wash your hands before eating.
- Only eat fruit that you have peeled (with clean hands).
- Do not eat uncooked vegetables when traveling out of the U.S.
- Identify when it is safe to drink local water vs bottled water. This may modify activities like brushing teeth.
- Bring additional face masks if you'll be in large crowds.

FLIGHT NEEDS

Tips for avoiding jet lag

This is a major issue, particularly when traveling to Asia or Africa, since the body clock is almost exactly reversed and flights are extremely LONG. In addition to this major shift in your circadian rhythm, jet lag is worsened by dehydration and inactivity during long flights.

- Drink water: Aim to drink about 8 ounces of water for every hour you are in the air, to combat dry cabin conditions. Adding electrolytes before/after the flight may also help.
- Do not drink alcohol on the flight; it dehydrates and disrupts sleep. It is good to avoid alcohol for the first few days in a new time zone for the same reasons.
- Do get up and stretch and move around the cabin. If unable to get up and move, perform ankle circles and heel raises to facilitate circulation through the legs.
- Wear comfortable, nonrestrictive clothing. Eye masks may be helpful in achieving more restful sleep.
- Compression socks or stockings may help with blood flow and circulation to address swelling.
- When possible, begin adjusting your wake and sleep schedule to the new time zone.

Note: It takes about 1 day of recovery for every time zone crossed. While this is not always feasible to manage with a tour schedule, plan ahead to set yourself up for success.

GENERAL WELLNESS NEEDS

Altitude changes

Elevated altitude makes it harder for the body to adequately absorb oxygen in the air, which can lead to increases in heart rate and/or increases in respiratory rate.

- If possible, arrive early to the area to help your body adapt.
- If you have postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS), be sure to use all tools available to help regulate your heart rate and manage symptoms (electrolytes, compression garments, salt intake, rest).
- Check with management if there will be supplemental oxygen available at the venue.
- Avoid alcohol consumption in the first few days at higher elevations.

Nutrition

Appropriately fueling while on the road can be difficult, but planning ahead can help.

- Check with management to see what appliances are available at the hotel and venue.
- Pack non-perishable snacks (protein bars, nuts, peanut butter, pretzels, etc).

Sleep hygiene / Stress management

Even though touring can be fun and exciting, make sure you prioritize rest and recovery for optimal health during the length of the tour.

- Add in a post-show cool-down. This not only aids in your muscle recovery, but can facilitate better sleep by downregulating adrenaline from the show.
- Sleep in a dark, cool room to encourage better sleep and recovery.
- Limit screen time prior to bed.
- Consider journaling as it can be a great way to help calm the mind, reflect on the day, and prepare for sleep.

Disclaimer: The information on staying healthy on tour, updated from an original 2015 Informational Paper, is intended to help guide and inform the dancer and training staff. It is not meant to take the place of the advice of a medical professional. This information is provided by Dance/USA Task Force on Dancer Health.

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