**Back Care for Dancers**

***Neutral Position***

The neutral position of your spine is a position in which your back is most comfortable, yet is neither fully rounded forward or arched backward. To find your neutral position, do the following:

**1**. Stand with your knees slightly bent

**2**. Tighten your buttocks and move your pelvis so your lower back fully rounds out

**3**. Tighten your lower back muscles and move your pelvis so your

lower back fully arches

**4**. Slowly wiggle your pelvis back and forth between these 2 extremes

to find a position somewhere in the middle which is most comfortable

Once you have found your neutral position, try to keep it by contracting your abdominal muscles. You can also find your neutral position when you are in other positions, such as sitting or lying. Keep your neutral position during exercise and throughout your daily activities.

***Abdominal Bracing***

Find your neutral position while you are lying in this position.



Gently pull in your abdominal muscles to keep this position.

DO NOT bear down or forcefully suck in your abdomen.

***Abdominal Bracing with Arms***

Abdominal bracing with arms helps you hold the neutral position against resistance from the weight of your arms.

* Contract your abdominal muscles and find your neutral position.
* Keep contracting your abdomen as you begin to raise one arm over your head.
* As you lower the first arm; raise your other arm overhead.
* Remember to keep breathing and keep your movements even and steady.
* Keep your trunk from moving by contracting your abdominal muscles.



***Abdominal Bracing with Legs***

Abdominal bracing with your legs increases the strength of your lower abdominal muscles, which are used to hold a neutral position against an

increased force.

* Find your neutral position and contract your lower abdominal muscles.
* Raise your leg without lifting or rotating your hips. You will need to contract your abdominal muscles more tightly as you move your knee toward your chest.
* **Do not** let your hips rise up or rotate as you exercise.
* Remember to keep breathing, and keep the motion as smooth as possible.



***Partial Sit-Ups***

Partial sit-ups are done to strengthen your abdominal muscles.

* Start from a neutral position
* Use your abdominal muscles to raise your upper back off the mat, while exhaling
* Rise up only enough to get your shoulder blades off the mat
* Hold the lift for a count of 5 seconds
* **Do not** thrust yourself off the floor or lift your head with your arms
* Keep your knees bent and your feet flat on the mat. You should feel the contraction only in your abdominal muscles.
* Make the motions smooth and relaxed



***Bridging***

Bridging helps strengthen your abdominal and lower back muscles and buttocks. It also improves your ability to hold a neutral position.

* Tighten your abdominal muscles to keep your back in a neutral position
* Use your buttock muscles to slowly rise off the surface without bending your lower back. Your abdominal and buttock muscles are used to keep your pelvis up.
* Relax your shoulders and neck as you hold the lift for a count of 5 seconds.
* Make sure to keep your breathing even.



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