



Utah Valley University Music Department

Musician's Health

Physical Health

Health needs to be made a priority!

The key to a long, successful career is maintaining your health. Most musicians keep a full to overflowing schedule. Between long practice hours, performances, and teaching there often is not enough time for proper eating, sleep, and exercise. But when health is secondary to opportunity or success, risks of illness and injury are increased.

Information contained in this pamphlet is intended to help raise awareness of some health concerns for musicians, but students are encouraged to continue learning about and improving health practices by studying more detailed resources available at the UVU Music Library and Main Library.

Performance-Related Injuries

In a study completed by Hoppmann & Reid, 1995, they found three major groups of problems among performing instrumentalists: musculoskeletal, nerve entrapment or thoracic outlet syndrome, and focal dystonia (qtd.in Foxman 310). "Pain is the major symptom of overuse among instrumentalists, and string players are most commonly affected" (Foxman 310).

Avoid Injury

- Always warm up
- Use effective practice techniques
- Plan breaks or rests in every rehearsal
- Build stamina into your rehearsal plan
- Stop, rest, and get help if you experience pain or discomfort



(Horvath 3-4, Klickstein 2)

Music Sport – Consider yourself an Athlete

We often hear about the preparation and training that athletes endure for a single event, race, or game, but do we stop to consider the same aspect a musicians? Do we consider the way we eat, sleep, and exercise as large contributing factors in our performance outcome?

You are what you eat. "Your body is composed of million of cells that are dependent upon an adequate intake of carbohydrate, proteins, fats, water, vitamins, and minerals. Deficiencies in one or more of these components will lead to less than optimum cellular function, decreased vitality, and if unchecked over a long period of time deficiencies can lead to sickness and disease." (Jameson 1) Plan your meals carefully to insure that your nutritional intake is sufficient to sustain your energy for practices and performances.

The amount of sleep required to stay healthy varies from person to person. Many factors contribute to the amount of sleep needed, including age and gender. Avoid getting less than 7 hours of sleep a night. Sleep deprivation has many negative consequences. (Dijk 4, 6)

According to Dr. Bronwen Ackermann, "exercise should reflect the kind of demands of your work." He recommends that orchestral musicians exercise twice a week for at least 45 minutes. All musicians should evaluate the length of their practice sessions and performances and plan exercise routines that will help strengthen the necessary muscles used to sustain the required practice time. Consult a physiotherapist to be sure that the exercise regimen is appropriate for your needs. (Ackermann)

“A sound that is too loud, or too loud for too long, is dangerous to hearing health, no matter what kind of sound it is or whether we all it noise, music, or something else.” – NASM/PAMA (3)

“We musicians need to be far more adept at caring for our wellbeing.” – Gerald Klickstein (2)

Hearing Health Noise Levels and Risks

Most experts agree that prolonged exposure to any noise or sound over **85 decibels (dB)** can cause hearing loss. Decibels are the units used to measure the intensity of a sound.

Two important things to remember:

1. The longer you are exposed to a loud noise, the greater the potential for hearing loss.
2. The closer you are to the source of a loud noise, the greater the risk that you'll experience some damage to your hearing mechanisms. (4)

Protect your hearing!!!

Wear hearing protection, turn down the volume, or leave the area if noise levels are too high. “...ask yourself, ‘Am I going to regret this someday?’” (1)

It's too loud (and too dangerous) when:

1. You have to raise your voice to be heard
2. You can't hear someone who's 3 feet away from you.
3. The speech around you sounds muffled or dull after you leave a noisy area
4. You experience tinnitus (pain, ringing, buzzing, or roaring in your ears) after you leave a noisy area (6)

(NASM/PAMA)

Psychological Health Performance Anxiety and Other Stresses

Musicians tend to feel a lot of pressure to perform well. Some of the pressure comes from our own expectations and some come from the expectations of those around us.

A recent study done with popular British musicians showed that most of the pressure came from “feeling that you must reach or maintain the standards of musicianship that you set for yourself” (Wills 24).

“Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) can involve both cognitive and physical symptoms, including catastrophic and self-defeating thought patterns, obsessive behaviors to counteract anxiety, and intense arousal of the autonomic nervous system leading to various physical discomforts, such as chest pain and profuse sweating.” (Khalsa 35)

Everyone must deal with stress at one level or another. Aside from performance stress, there are also the stresses of everyday life. UVU Health Services provides a variety of wellness programs designed to help students cope with these stresses. For more information go to: uvu.edu/studenthealth or call 801-863-8876.

Vocal Health

Make general health a priority!



Tips to Keep You Talkin'

By National Center for Voice and Speech



1. Speaking loudly or over long periods may lead to a voice disorder. Recognize when your voice is tired. Consider vocal training if you have to talk or sing loudly, or speak extensively for your vocation or avocation. Vocal endurance, like athletics, requires special skills.
2. Hoarseness or breathiness may signal a voice disorder. If either symptom persists for more than two weeks, call a physician or speech-language pathologist.
3. Stress can lead to forceful voice production, resulting in possible tissue damage. Relaxation techniques can improve your voice and allow you to speak more effectively and longer. Try stretching shoulder, neck and facial muscles periodically; slow, deep breaths also may help.
4. Caffeine and alcohol dehydrate vocal folds, which can make it more difficult to keep them vibrating. Drink plenty of water to combat their drying effects. For example, for every mug of coffee you ingest, drink at least one 8-oz. glass of water.
5. Some medications lead to dehydration of vocal folds. Antihistamines, taken for colds or allergies, shrink swollen membranes and reduce saliva and mucus production. These medications lessen the discomforts of the cold, but dry the vocal tissues. If you are taking medications that dehydrate, drink lots of water and other fluids. Try to keep home and working environments at a relative humidity of 40 percent or more.
6. Repeatedly clearing the throat or coughing may irritate vocal fold tissues. Sipping water, swallowing or sucking on a cough drop may ease the irritation in the throat.
7. Frequent heartburn and a sour taste may mean stomach acids are spilling over into your larynx, which may lead to voice problems. If you experience these symptoms, avoid high-acid foods and late-night eating. Elevate your head with extra pillows or raise the head of the bed.
8. Smoking is the leading cause of laryngeal cancer. At the very least, smoking irritates tissues used for singing and talking. Don't Smoke!

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