

YOUNG DANCERS & ANTERIOR HIP PAIN

by Jack R. Giangiulio, D.C., B.S.

When a young dancer says hip pain, it can mean pain in the buttocks, sacro-iliac joint, or the actual hip joint (where your thigh meets your pelvis). That's why I always ask the dancer to point to the painful region. If it is true hip pain, usually the young dancer will point to the front (anterior) of her or his hip.

Anterior hip pain is a common problem in younger dancers especially when they are practicing for a performance or they have advanced to a higher level in dance. As dancers advance, so do the hours and intensity of dance classes. Usually in younger dancers the hip joint itself is not the primary problem. The problem is the fatigue and/or injury of the muscles that move the hip joint. There are four main muscles in dancers that cause anterior hip pain; two of the muscles (*Rectus Femoris* and *Sartorius*) are in the front of your thigh and two (*Psoas* and *Iliacus*) are above the hip in your pelvis. When one or more of these muscles are injured they tighten up to protect themselves producing what is called a *spasm*. Muscles in spasm will abnormally pull on the hip joint making the hip joint less flexible and causing irritation, which in turn causes tendonitis and pain. Medicine might relieve some pain, but it will not cure this problem; in fact it will prolong it. The longer you have this problem the worst it gets, causing other muscles to spasm, such as, the *Piriformis* (your turn-out muscle).

If you have anterior hip pain, I recommend consulting a sports injury chiropractor who is experienced in treating dancers. Manipulation of the hip joints combined with therapy to the muscles will provide you with immediate relief and increased flexibility. If you cannot find a chiropractor, a sports injury physical therapists may be able to help.

Until then, here is a tip for all dancers with an injury. Before dancing make sure to warm-up. Not dance class warm-up, that's a workout! I mean to jog in place or around the studio for 6 minutes, anything to get the blood moving. After which you should stretch your injured area. Now it's time for dance warm-up and dance class. When class or the performance is over it is very important to immediately ice your injured area for 10-20 minutes. This will reduce the pain and irritation created by dancing. Remember ice is your friend.

Dance Long & Healthy

Jack R. Giangiulio, D.C., B.S. is internationally known for treating dance professionals backstage and in his Newport Beach, California office. He is a sought after dance injury consultant and lecturer as well as an Assistant Professor at the Southern California University of Health Sciences where he teaches physical modalities and rehabilitation. He is published in *Dance Teacher Magazine*, *Dance Spirit Magazine*, *Dynamic Chiropractic*, *DROC News* and www.danceinjurydoctor.com. For more about Dr. Giangiulio go to www.drangiulio.com or www.danceinjurydoctor.com.