Protecting Your Neuromusculoskeletal Health

National Association of Schools of Music and Performing Arts Medicine Association
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• Neuromusculoskeletal health is essential to your lifelong success as a musician. Practicing and performing music is physically demanding, and musicians are susceptible to numerous neuromusculoskeletal disorders.

• Some musculoskeletal disorders are related to behavior; others are genetic; still others are the result of trauma or injury. Some genetic conditions can increase a person’s risk of developing certain behavior-related neuromusculoskeletal disorders. However, many of these are preventable or treatable. Following are tips to stay healthy:

  • Warm up physically, away from the instrument, as well as musically, before playing. Stretch when taking a break or when finished. Do not stretch when cold.

  • Maintain proper body alignment and balance. The Healthy Musicianship course, as well as somatic education classes such as yoga, Alexander, Feldenkrais, and Body Mapping can be of aid in this.

  • Take regular breaks during practice and rehearsal. 10 minutes out of every hour of practice is recommended for healthy musicians.

  • Make sure your equipment fits you. Most instruments can be modified to the player's needs in some way—whether by moving a key, adding a thumb pad, etc.

  • Avoid sudden increases in practice times.

  • Know your body and its limits, and avoid “overdoing it.”

  • Try to get 7-9 hours of sleep a night, eat a diet of colorful, non-processed foods, and drink 6-8 glasses of water a day.

• If you experience pain from playing or singing that does not go away or get better within 48 hours, you should make an appointment with a medical professional at Olin Health Center.

• If you are concerned about your neuromusculoskeletal health in relationship to your program of study, or are experiencing chronic issues, contact Judy Palac, chair of the Musicians' Wellness Team, for an appointment at the monthly Consult and Refer clinic held by the team.

• To learn more about protecting and enhancing your musical health over your lifetime, consider enrolling in the Healthy Musicianship class. See the MSU Musicians' Wellness Team web page for more information.