



## DANCE NUTRITION

A healthy dietary pattern contains adequate amounts of all essential nutrients for health and wellbeing, optimal dance performance, and enhanced recovery. It consists of a wide variety of nutritious foods from each of the core food groups:

**Grain foods** (such as bread, pasta and rice) are a key source of carbohydrates, which fuel the muscles.

A regular supply of carbohydrates during training is critical for strength and endurance, can delay fatigue and prevent injury.

While wholegrain varieties provide more fibre, which is good for gut health, dancers need to have both white and wholegrain varieties to balance their energy requirements.

**Meats and alternatives** (including fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, seeds, and legumes/beans) are valuable sources of high quality protein and iron.

Protein is essential for muscle growth, maintenance, and repair, while iron delivers oxygen to the muscles for energy production.

All dancers have increased requirements for iron, regardless of gender.

**Dairy foods** (specifically, milk, yoghurt, and cheese) are rich sources of calcium, which is a key component of bone.

For best bone health, dancers need adequate vitamin D as well which mainly comes from sun exposure but is available in good amounts in oily fish and egg yolks.

Adequate calcium and vitamin D reduces the risk of stress fractures and broken bones, which are common among dancers.

If you are allergic to dairy, calcium-fortified soy products are the best alternative.

**Fruit and vegetables** are rich sources of many vitamins and minerals, each of which has an important function, from energy production to muscle contraction.

Each colour fruit and vegetable has unique nutritional and health benefits, so be sure to 'eat the rainbow'!

**Fun foods** include biscuits, cakes, pastries, ice cream, lollies, chocolate, and chips. These foods do not fit within any of the core food groups and are not the key players for nutritional health, but including them intuitively can enhance your emotional, social and cultural wellbeing.

Carbohydrates, protein, and fat are necessary macronutrients for normal body function.

Fat is an important source of energy, is essential for hormonal health and the absorption of vitamins A, D, E and K. It is best sourced from a variety of foods including oils, spreads, nuts, seeds, and avocado.



The minimum recommended serves needed from each food group per day are (examples are 1 serve):

6-8 serves of grain foods

- 1 slice of bread
- ½ cup cooked rice
- ½ cup cooked pasta
- ⅔ cup wheat cereal flakes
- 3 crispbreads

2.5-3 serves of meats and alternatives

- 100g red meat (raw weight) or poultry (raw weight) or fish (cooked weight)
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup legumes (beans, lentils, chickpeas, or split peas)
- 170g tofu
- 1 handful nuts or seeds

3 serves of dairy foods

- 1 cup milk (fresh, UHT long life or reconstituted powdered)
- ¾ cup yoghurt
- 2 slices hard cheese e.g. cheddar
- ½ cup ricotta cheese
- 1 cup soy milk with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100mL

2 serves of fruit

- 1 piece of medium-sized fruit e.g. apple, banana, orange, pear
- 2 pieces of small fruit e.g. apricots, kiwi fruit, plums
- 1 cup canned fruit
- ½ cup fruit juice
- 30g dried fruit

4-5 serves of vegetables

- ½ cup cooked vegetables
- 1 cup raw vegetables
- ½ cup legumes (beans, chickpeas or lentils)
- ½ medium potato
- 1 medium tomato

This number of serves meets the nutrient and energy requirements of an inactive individual of small build. Additional serves of core foods or 'fun foods' are needed by people who are of larger build or are physically active to meet their higher energy requirements.