

Vocal and Musculoskeletal Health and Injury Prevention

The Music, Dance & Theatre Department of NJCU believes in maintaining healthy practices and performance habits by making available to all persons, resources and guidelines for vocal health. These practices and protocols largely depend on the personal choices made by each regarding health and safety, and fulfillment of these practices lie solely on their use in order to maintain the health and well being of each individual.

An individual who practices, rehearses or performs on an instrument or vocally has the potential to suffer injuries due to repetitive motion related to the characteristics of each. Such injuries as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, bursitis, and arthritis as well as failing posture, excessive force, overuse, stress and inadequate rest can exacerbate and contribute to chronic injuries.

Organizations now exist that are fully dedicated to the support and maintenance of musician health. NASM, in collaboration with the Performing Arts Medical Association (<http://www.artsmed.org>) offers useful information regarding musician health and maintenance. ALL MDT students are encouraged to visit this site to gather key information regarding their profession. Students can also visit the NASM website on neuromusculoskeletal and vocal health: <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/publications/brochures-advisories/nasm-pama-nms-vocal-health/>, and the National Center for Voice and Speech for a complete list of medications causing side effects: <http://www.ncvs.org>.

NJCU Orientation and Additional Music, Dance & Theatre Activities

- NJCU's Campus Life and Housing Office addresses issues regarding the effects of alcohol, smoking and drugs on the body and voice.
- Yearly Vocal Health presentations presented by the Coordinator of Vocal Studies.
- NJCU Counseling Center offers support and available services regarding physical and mental health.

Neuromusculoskeletal Health

Due to the physical demands of performing music, musicians are potentially subject to numerous neuromusculoskeletal disorders. Many of these disorders can be categorized as congenital; others related to repetitive motion; yet others the result of a specific injury or unrelated trauma. Certain innate conditions can increase an individual's risk factor for developing behavior disorders.

Neuromusculoskeletal disorders and conditions can be treatable or prevented with healthy practices and protocols:

- Physical warm ups that are group or self-directed.
- Attention to postures and body alignment.
- Scheduled breaks during practice sessions to relieve stress and reduce repetitive motion.
- Setting a reasonable practice or rehearsal time.
- Meaningful assessment and mindfulness during practice sessions.
- Understanding your body and its limitations, especially monitoring strength and stamina during sessions.

Each practice and rehearsal session should be monitored for maintaining healthy habits and protecting your physical and mental state.

If an individual has continued concerns regarding their personal musculoskeletal health, take time to seek out a medical professional or your area Coordinator who can guide you to an appropriate contact person.

Vocal Health and Injury Prevention

NJCU's Music, Dance & Theatre Department wishes to thank the following for their care and information:

Grabscheid Voice and Swallowing Center at Mount Sinai, NY,
(<https://www.mountsinai.org/locations/grabscheid-voice-swallowing-center>)

Voice Center at NYU Langone, NY,
(<https://nyulangone.org/locations/voice-center>)

The National Center for Voice & Speech, (<http://ncvs.org>)

Brian Benson MD, LLC, (<http://www.bergen-ent.com>)

Troy Clifford Dargin, PhD, Speech Language Pathologist

Hackensack University Hospital, NJ

- Maintain your general health in addition to adequate rest to minimize fatigue.
- Exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet. Seek a Nutritionist who is licensed to help regulate and balance your food intake.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks (coffee, tea, and soft drinks) alcohol and spicy, acidic foods, and dairy products if you have food sensitivities.
- Maintain appropriate body hydration; the National Academies of Sciences suggests 3.7-2.7 liters daily.
- Maintain indoor climates by using a humidifier at night for the dryness.
- Limit your vocal use while at your job, during social occasions and places where amplification is used.
- Avoid loud coughing, throat clearing, decrease yelling, and think before utilizing hard vocal attacks during conversations.

- Always warm up your speaking voice slowly with total mindfulness and mental focus; allowing sufficient time for this is crucial.
- Monitor physical aspects of your body, posture and alignment before moving to the breathing process.
- Learn to breathe quietly and allow your body to compress air efficiently alleviating neck and excess body tension.
- Pay attention to your body and the coordinating factor of breath and free flow phonation.
- If pain or tension occurs, stop and reassess or ask a professional who can guide and monitor your behavior.
- Rely on vocal cool-down exercises to balance blood flow, air pressure and release tension.
- Use daily meditation exercises for stress relief, anxiety, focus and healing as a means of supporting the body and mind as a whole.
- Know thyself! Know your physical limitations in order to avoid overdoing.

NJCU's and MDT's necessity to inform students, faculty and staff regarding vocal and musculoskeletal health and injury prevention can be viewed at the NASM cite for Vocal and musculoskeletal health:

https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/4b_NASM_PAMA_NMH-Student_Guide-Custom_June-2014.pdf

<https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/publications/brochures-advisories/nasm-pama-nms-vocal-health/>