

As the weather turns cold I notice that many of our dancers do not seem to know how to keep their muscles warm to help prevent injuries. Here are some tips I wanted to share with you.  
:) ~Hellie~

**Muscles need to be kept warm to prevent injury.** Dance studios are large spaces and often difficult to heat evenly. Dancers need to learn to dress in layers to accommodate different studio temperatures as well as activity levels. During breaks or when leaving the studio it is essential to stay extra warm as clothes that may be damp from perspiration will give you a chill when at rest or going outside. Also, when working hard you may overheat and need to remove some layers to allow your body to breath.

**Here are items which ALL dancers should have in their dance bags:**

1. **A sweater** .. or 2 (or more). Different weights are nice so you can use what is right for the temperature and level of activity. One sweater should be tight-fitting so you and your teacher may easily see your dance technique (and of a loose enough weave that you can move easily). The other one could be bigger and looser for wearing during the beginning of class when your body is coldest, and also for tossing on after class during break-time.
2. **Leg-warmers** – These are not a fashion statement for dancers. They are a useful tool. You may want to have more than one pair. I used to double-up on cold days or if I was nursing an injury or strain. Sometimes you may want your leg-warmers to cover your knees. Or, maybe you just need your ankles and calves covered. Remember it is always colder closer to the floor, and your feet, ankles, Achilles tendons, and calf muscles are susceptible to over-use injuries without proper care.
3. If you have hamstring or hip flexibility issues warmth is important. **A nice cozy pair of old fashioned sweat pants** works quite well. But they should not be too big or bulky. Some dance-wear suppliers make knitted garments which may suit your needs. Lycra does NOT help. It is too thin and, either, just holds the moisture onto your skin, or dries so quickly that it makes you feel cold.
4. I have been in studios where dancers have even worn warm scarves around their necks until they get warmed-up. And I find that to be useful at times, though it can be a distraction.

**Important rule:** Your warm-ups must **not** interfere with your dancing in any way, and must not pull focus. That is why simple black is always good. Or, at least a solid darker color. No stripes, patterns, or very bright colors which are distracting for the teacher's eye as he/she is trying to watch for technique issues during class.

Above all remember that your teacher has the needs of the entire class in focus, so follow instructions and communicate clearly to your teacher BEFORE class if you have special issues which need to be addressed.

**Here is a tip from my “old” dancing years** – Back in the olden days when we couldn't purchase the many ready-to-wear items that dancers have available to them today.

**If you have old tights** (any color) which are no longer wearable for performances:

- Cut the feet off.
- Cut the crotch out.

- Put the tights on upside down over your head.

The legs then become the “sleeves” of a simple long-sleeved undergarment wearable under summer camisoles and tank leotards. Good for those days when you didn't get the laundry done and have no long-sleeved leotard available. :) Way to re-cycle!

**One more important detail:** Do Not allow sweaty sweaters and warmers to remain in your bag for long. **Keep everything clean!** Please! Your fellow dancers will appreciate it, very