

Staying Fit

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Once upon a time, marching band shows were not very demanding. The band's purpose was to perform at halftime at the football games and provide entertainment for the football fans. That has changed over the past couple decades and bands have become competitive organizations with shows that challenge the performer both physically and mentally. What concerns me is the physical aspect of the modern shows. I go to contests and other performances and I never fail to see a few kids coming off the field after performances sick or injured. I am not a medical professional, but I do know there are a few things that you can do to prevent injuries and sickness from happening to you during a performance.

1. **Eat right** - Your body is a machine that needs the right kind of fuel to perform properly. Burgers and pizza are great to eat -- goodness knows I have eaten more than my share when I was marching, but try to eat healthy foods. Lots of fruits and vegetables, lean meats and grains, bread and pasta are a good idea. Also drink milk and try to drink plenty of water the day before and the day of the show. This is especially true if it is going to be hot.
2. **Get plenty of rest** - I don't mean on the bus while you are traveling to the show either. It is much easier to concentrate if you are well rested. That means staying up late the night before a show and listening to your Hanson record collection is probably not a good idea. Drugs and alcohol - Stay away from ANY drugs unless prescribed to you by a doctor. This includes alcohol. I know that you probably have heard the stay away from drugs and alcohol lecture many times, but it is an important message and should be repeated. I can't tell you what to do, but you at least owe it to yourself and your fellow band members to perform to the best of your ability at every show. Taking drugs or alcohol will significantly affect your performance and not for the better.
3. **Stretch, stretch, stretch** - Traditionally, guards spend much more time stretching than any other section in the band and for good reason. Modern guard routines are very demanding physically and require the guard members to do lots of running, leaping and equipment work . Newer drills also place a greater physical demand on other band members too. Proper stretching allows your body to better handle the stress placed on it by the drill. Wanna get those toes up in the air when marching? Here's a trick I learned when I marched drum corps. Stand a few inches away from a wall (facing it). While keeping your heel on the floor, place your toes on the wall and gently push. This stretches the muscles in the soles of your feet and allows you to point your toes higher when marching. It is also a good idea to stretch you leg muscles. Several exercises will do this. Consult your physical education teacher, trainer or doctor to see what stretching exercises they suggest.

Most of you will not experience an injury or sickness in your marching band career and if you follow the steps above, it will be even less likely. Remember to take care of yourself. Watching your band perform from the sidelines is not nearly as much fun as being on the field with them.

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