

Injury Prevention for Musicians

Supporting Healthy Habits for Lifelong Musical Enjoyment

Playing music is a rewarding experience, but it also requires physical resilience. Musicians of all ages—whether beginners or professionals—may encounter physical strain or injury due to the repetitive nature of practice. This guide is designed to help faculty and students maintain healthy habits, minimize the risk of injury, and know what steps to take if discomfort arises.

Common Music-Related Injuries

Understanding common music-related injuries is the first step toward prevention:

- **Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI):** Caused by continuous repetitive movements, especially in the hands, wrists, and arms.
 - **Tendinitis and Tenosynovitis:** Inflammation of tendons due to overuse, often affecting hands and forearms.
 - **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome:** Pressure on the median nerve in the wrist, leading to numbness, tingling, or weakness.
 - **Hearing Health:** Exposure to prolonged or high-volume sounds can lead to hearing damage. Use proper hearing protection during ensemble rehearsals and performances.
-

Preventive Practices

Incorporating these practices into your routine can significantly reduce the likelihood of injury:

- **Warm-Up and Stretching:** Begin each session with gentle exercises to increase circulation and prepare muscles.
 - *Example:* Hold your hands in front of you, gently pull back each finger one by one, and rotate wrists slowly.
- **Correct Posture and Instrument Positioning:** Align your spine naturally, avoid slouching, and ensure your instrument is positioned comfortably.
 - *Tip:* Use a mirror or ask an instructor to help assess your posture.
- **Practice Routines and Breaks:** Structure sessions with frequent short breaks. A good rule is 50 minutes of practice followed by a 10-minute break—or every 20–30 minutes for longer sessions.

- **Strength and Flexibility Training:** Incorporate yoga, Pilates, or targeted exercises to build endurance and flexibility.
-

When to Seek Help

Listening to your body is essential. If you experience discomfort, take action early:

- **Recognizing Symptoms:** Watch for numbness, tingling, pain, or swelling. These are early signs of strain and should not be ignored.
 - **Immediate Steps:**
 1. Stop the activity causing pain.
 2. Rest and avoid aggravating movements.
 3. Consult a healthcare professional—preferably one experienced with musicians.
 4. Follow a rehabilitation plan, which may include physical therapy, technique adjustments, and gradual return to playing.
 - **Accessing Resources:** KU Health & Wellness Services can provide referrals to specialists such as physical therapists and audiologists.
-

Resources and Further Reading

Explore these trusted resources for more in-depth guidance:

Books:

- *Playing (Less) Hurt* by Janet Horvath
- *The Musician's Way* by Gerald Klickstein
- *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body* by Barbara Conable

Websites:

- Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA)
- [MusiciansWay Injury Prevention Resources](#)
- [Pasadena Conservatory Music Injury Prevention Guide](#)
- [Johns Hopkins Performing Arts Rehabilitation](#)