



# R. Laney's Guide to Good Drumming Health



## **Protect Your Ears!**

- Countless professional and amateur musicians attest to the need to take care of one's ears at EVERY age level.
- Any ringing in your ears is a sign that you've lost some of your hearing FOREVER.
- In-ear noise reducers are shown to be the most effective. Put them in before you even pick up your sticks. Keep earplugs in your pocket at all times! It's part of the life a musician.

## **Stretch!**

- As with running, hiking, weightlifting, or any other physical activity it's important to stretch your whole body before drumming.
- Play just a little bit beforehand (simple 8's or slow diddle exercises work well) before you actually stretch. This will help you work with the muscles while they are "warm" rather than "cold."
- Never bounce while stretching. Always hold the stretch to a decent level of tension.
- Stretching also psychologically "shifts" your mind to the task at hand.
- Remember to stretch your wrists in all directions.

## **Watch Your Technique!**

- Sloppy technique is one of the most common causes for drumming injuries, including tendonitis, inflamed ligaments, and elbow epicondylitis.
- Don't force anything while drumming, including speed, volume, or time.
- Problems in technique are not always associated with the hands and wrists. Many problems can stem from the shoulders, neck, back, feet, and even the hips.
- Be especially careful how you carry yourself with your harness while marching.
- Hickory sticks are one of the best at reducing shock that enters the arm.

## **Don't Overdo Yourself!**

- Drumming is primarily an endurance activity more than a strength activity.
- Practice simple rudiments for long periods of time to gain endurance rather than complex exercises. Single strokes and diddle/paradiddle variations work great for this.

## **Posture!**

- Be critical of every joint point of pressure in your body and eliminate any excess stress.
- Back should be straight with a proper lower lumbar curve, head should be held high rather than slouched, elbows and arms should be at a good angle, shoulders relaxed.

## **Relax!**

- Tension can cause poor playing and (even worse) health problems. Common problem areas are the shoulders, the wrists, the fingers, and the neck.
- A proper rebound to your stroke can eliminate many of these problems before they even start.
- Remember that drumming is primarily endurance-based, not strength-based. If you find yourself hurting after a short time of playing, do a proprioceptional check of yourself ("sensing" your body without actually looking at it or grabbing it) to identify any problem areas.

# What to Do When You're Hurt

## Stop Playing Right Away!

- If you feel any sort of pain in your body, stop immediately.
- Inflammation and soreness can sometimes lead to permanent damage to joints. If possible stop play immediately and put ice on the effected area.
- Pain is usually your body's way of saying "STOP THAT!" similar to how it naturally hurts when you touch a hot stove. It's a way of preventing further injury.

## What Exactly is Inflammation?

- Inflammation is what happens after your body has endured some sort of injury and is attempting to heal itself.
- The soreness and occasional redness is the result of blood cells rushing to provide healing products to the injured site.
- It is a sign of damaged cellular structures and needs to be rested as soon as possible.
- Continuous strain on an inflamed or sore region of the body can cause serious problems down the road, even in non-drumming related activities.

## "I've Got Blisters on My Fingers!"

- Blisters are a natural side-effect of prolonged drumming. They are both a blessing and a curse for us percussionists.
- Blisters are caused by excessive rubbing of skin on another surface, including drumsticks.
- It's OK to drain a blister as long as the skin and the needle are sterilized. Let a trained physician or nurse do it for you if possible. An infection is the last thing you want to add to blistered skin.
- Blisters form callouses before long, which are great when properly treated. A dry callous can cause cracking and sometimes debilitating cuts, but a well-lubricated callous can help your drumming tremendously.

## Seek Professional Help!

- If your pains become chronic or become worse with no apparent reason, seek a doctor's help.
- Problems that are caught early can help keep you drumming for many, many years to come.

## On The Interwebz:

<http://www.sportsrehab.com/drumminginjuries.htm> - Great site for general drumming health.  
<http://puppetista.org/drums/stretch.html> - Helpful pictures for the best ways to stretch.  
<http://www.etymotic.com/> - Site of the best earplugs I have yet to find.

If you ever have questions about drums and drum-related health issues, feel free to contact Ryan at [RLaneyPerc@gmail.com](mailto:RLaneyPerc@gmail.com).

DRUM ON!