

# Dance Conditioning

## CUPPING

Many dancers ask us what cupping is as they have never seen it before. Cupping therapy has a long history of application in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Traditionally, a flammable substance, such as alcohol, herbs or paper is placed in a cup made of glass, metal, wood or bamboo. The material inside the cup was set on fire to create a vacuum. As the fire goes out, the cup was placed upside down over certain meridian points on the body to treat various health conditions according to Traditional Chinese Medicine principles. Cupping in this form often leaves large bruises on the skin.

**Our Approach:** Here at The Ballet Blog we use a totally different approach to cupping, which uses a plastic cup and a small suction gun to create a gentle vacuum inside the cup. Lotion is applied to the area being treated, then a small vacuum is created and the cup is moved slowly and consistently up, down and across the fascial lines.

**The Aim:** The aim is to traction out the layers of fascia, improving hydration, blood flow, extensibility and removing adhesions between layers. This can be safely done by young dancers at home, and is a wonderful adjunct to their flexibility work. The skin should never draw up past the lowest black lines on the cup, and always keep the cup mobility to avoid bruising.

### How To Cup:

- For all of these areas, apply some cream over the entire area, place the cup on the skin and use half a squeeze of the suction gun to gently draw up the top layer of tissue up. Make sure that the skin does not pass the thin black line on the cup. With your thumb and index finger you should be able to glide the cup up and down, and across the area.

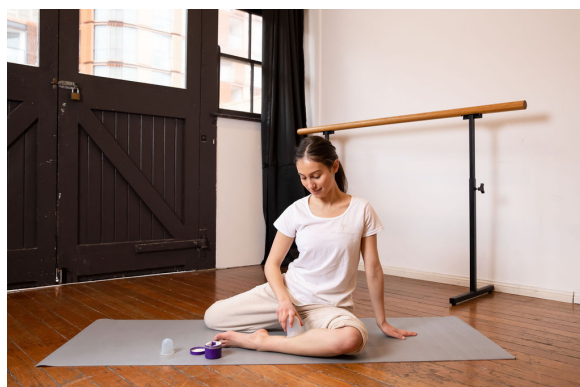
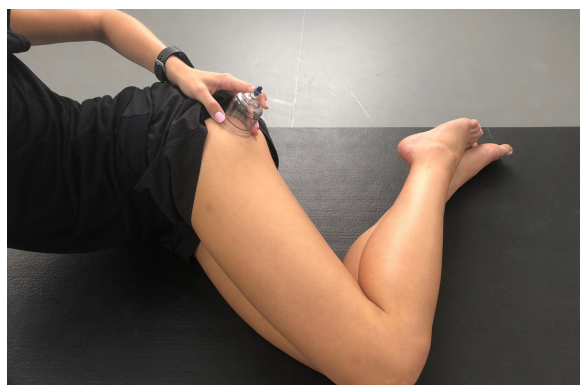


- Take note of where it slides easily, and where it becomes difficult. There should be no pain, but you will feel a curious vacuuming sensation, and traction deeper in the tissues.
- Move the cup slowly, but do keep it moving. You do not want to leave it over one area, as this is when a bruise will develop. You are wanting to see a slight flushing of the skin, showing that new blood is being drawn to that area, but you do not want to have any colour that lasts after about 5-10 minutes of stopping cupping. You do not want to see any bruising.

**Areas To Try:** You can focus over individual muscle groups, but it is more helpful in thinking of working along the following lines, as described by Tom Myers:

- Superficial Front Line
- Lateral Line
- Superficial Back Line

The Deep Line does affect the foot, but it is very hard to cup.



Find out more:  
Dance Educator Series – Level 1 – The Fundamentals

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