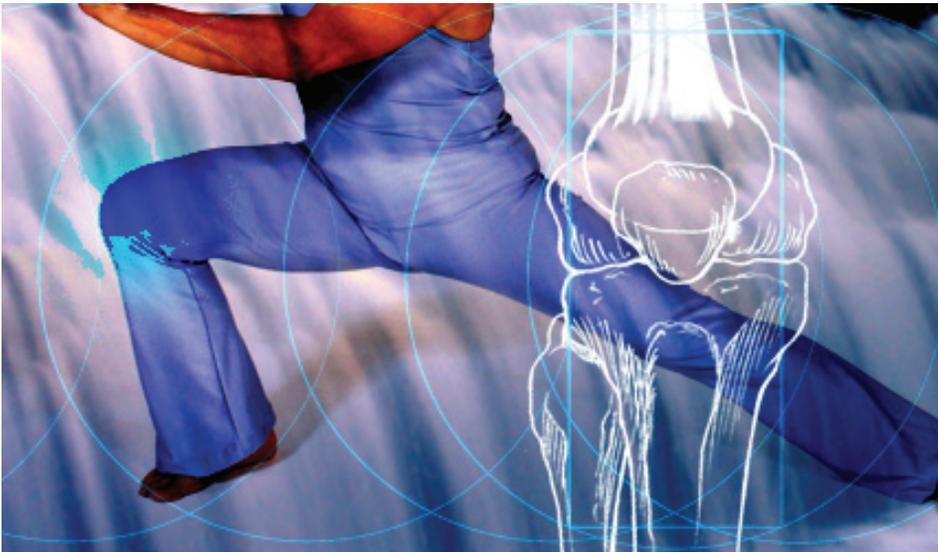




Nia: Dancing Through Life

Tips for integrating Nia into every moment



The Knees - Your Mobility and Stability

The body has a miraculous ability to heal. The fact that the body can heal itself after a major injury – or something so extreme as a joint replacement surgery – is simply awe-inspiring. Many Nia students have experienced even faster healing from injuries through Nia and with less artificial support. As you may have seen, it is not uncommon to see students taking off their knee and ankle braces before class! How is this possible? Because Nia teaches us how to move in functional ways that respect the design of the body.

The knee is the largest and most complex joint in your body. It is a hinge joint, made up of the lower end of your thighbone (femur), the top of your shinbone (tibia), and your kneecap (patella), which slides into a groove at the end of your thighbone. Tendons, ligaments and muscles, including your thigh

muscles (quadriceps) provide your knee with strength and stability. When your knees function correctly, you feel a sense of stability when you move, rather than tension, wobbling, or dragging to one side.

The knee is one of your 13 Main Joints (see the Nia book* for the 13-Joint Exercise), which allows you to move through space in all directions. The condition of your ankle and hip joints directly affects the functioning of your knees and legs, including your ability to turn your feet in different directions. If your hip joints are flexible and mobile, your foot can turn and your knee will follow. When your hip joints are tight, your knee will resist when your foot turns and you will notice a pulling sensation. If your foot and ankle joints are too loose, your knees will grab and tense up to protect themselves.

Strengthening your feet and ankles allows your knee joints to relax, so they can easily bend and extend. Practicing Nia in bare feet is a great way to improve the health and comfort of your knees by conditioning your entire base.

Test your knee mobility and stability

Throughout the day, notice the direction of your feet and consciously vary their direction. This practice develops flexibility in your hip joints and naturally self-heals your knees. Try walking with your toes pointed forward (parallel), then pointed out, and then pointed in. Avoid crossing your knees when you sit to keep the energy flowing through your leg joints. From time to time, shake your whole leg as if you are trying to shake your feet and toes off. This helps keep your knees loose and toned. Plus, it's fun!

For more information

Ask your teacher for more information and other Nia handouts.

Get the Nia book, *The Nia Technique** (2004, Broadway Books).

Go to NiaNow.com to learn more and subscribe to the FREE monthly newsletter for Everybody!

*Rosas, Debbie, and Carlos Rosas. *The Nia Technique: the High-powered Energizing Workout That Gives You a New Body and a New Life*. New York: Broadway, 2004. Print.