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9 Reasons Dancing Is Good for Your Health

From aerobic health benefits to improved bone health, flexibility, and mental health, busting a move can deliver a lot of advantages.



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Whether you take a class or bop to your favorite beats in your living room or the club, all dancing can be a plus for your health.

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Dancing can be many things: An expression of art, a fun hobby, a representation of culture, and a great form of exercise.

“Dancing is the ultimate workout,” says [Julie Granger](#), a Paris-based International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA) personal trainer and founder and creator of The Studio Paris and Ballerina Body Training. Not only does dancing involve engaging all of your muscles and limbs, it also gets your heart pumping. Plus, dancing can be a whole lot of fun.

A workout you can look forward to? Sign us up.

The style of dance you do will influence how intense of a workout it is, but pretty much any style of dance can be a workout. Granger, who is also a former professional ballerina, says choose a type of dance according to your favorite tunes. You can sign up for a class at your local gym or studio, take one virtually, or hit the town. “No matter which you choose, and even if it is just dancing at the club on Saturday night, you will get benefits,” she says.

So, what are the specific health benefits of busting a move? Some are the health benefits that come with any type of exercise; others are unique to dance.

Here are some research-backed ways dancing can improve your health.

1. Dance Boosts Cardiovascular Health

Like other aerobic exercise, dancing is great for improving cardiovascular function.

A [study published in 2016 in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*](#) found that people who engaged in moderate-intensity dancing (defined in the study as enough to make you out of breath or sweaty) were 46 percent less likely to develop heart disease or die from it than nondancers over 10 years of follow-up, according to population-based survey data of adults ages 40 and up. In comparison, moderate-intensity walkers were just 25 percent less likely to suffer heart health issues.

The study also notes the social aspect of dancing, and the relaxation that comes with it (more on this below), could be partly responsible for its health benefits.

2. Dancing Builds Core Strength

Dance requires balance and helps build core strength, which helps promote good [posture](#) and prevent muscle injuries and [back pain](#), according to [Mayo Clinic](#).

Granger adds that this is particularly true for ballet. “In ballet, you train your body to stand still, often on one leg. This helps you train the deep muscles in your body, which you would not work otherwise,” she says. You are also engaging your abs, “which are an essential part to balancing,” she notes.

3. Dance Promotes Flexibility

In addition to building strength, many forms of dance stretch the limbs of the body, which improves [flexibility](#), says [Elizabeth C Gardner, MD](#), an orthopedic sports medicine surgeon at Yale Medicine and associate professor at Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut. “Both of these (improved [strength and flexibility](#)) contribute to improved balance, which can help to avoid falls and reduce the risk of injury in other aspects of life,” she explains.

This is especially true for ballet dancers. “Ballet training involves a great deal of flexibility training. Flexibility means improved mobility, which means that any type of daily activity will be more enjoyable, whether you take yoga or you are trying to reach for the top cabinet in your kitchen,” says Granger.

4. Dance Can Help With Weight Loss

Dancing is also a form of both aerobic and anaerobic exercise, which is a great calorie burner, Dr. Gardner says. “Jumping and twirling movements are great aerobic training, while holding positions of squatting and balance positions can turn on the anaerobic energy system,” she explains.

In general, the more up-tempo the dance style, the more calories and energy will be burned.

Depending on the style of dance and your bodyweight, 30 minutes of dancing can burn between 90 and 252 calories, according to [Harvard Medical School](#). This type of high-intensity calorie burning can help support weight loss if you’re trying to shed pounds. If you want to maximize calorie burn, Granger suggests taking a dance cardio class, designed to blast calories and improve [physical fitness](#).

5. Dancing Is Good for Bone Health

“As a form of weight-bearing activity, unlike a stationary bike or swimming, dancing can help to maintain bone density,” says Gardner. Per the [National Osteoporosis Foundation](#), high-impact and weight-bearing exercises, including some forms of dance, help you effectively maintain and even build new bone mass.

Some [research](#) suggests for older adults with [osteoporosis](#), dancing can help reverse some of the damage of that chronic condition. Other [research](#) in children suggests that those who took ballet had better bone mineral content after a three-year period compared with children who didn’t do ballet.

6. Dancing May Help Prevent Memory Loss

Dance often requires learning moves and routines (choreography).

“There’s actually some very good evidence that social dancing can reduce the risk of cognitive decline as we get older,” says [Carolyn Fredericks, MD](#), a neurologist at Yale Medicine, citing a [study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*](#) involving 469 people over the age of 75. Out of all the physical activities, including walking, bicycling, stair climbing, swimming, and group exercise classes, dancing was the only activity associated with a lower risk of dementia.

“We always recommend that older adults seek out [cardiovascular exercise](#) and social engagement, and cognitive challenge — social dancing gets all three of these,” Dr. Fredericks says.

7. Dance Is Good for Mental Health

[Research](#) shows that dance can help decrease anxiety, increase self-esteem, and improve psychological well-being.

And certain types of dance have even been used as [treatment for depression](#). [Research published in 2019 in *Frontiers in Psychology*](#) found that dance movement therapy (DMT) — defined by the [American Dance Therapy Association](#) as the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual, for the purpose of improving health and well-being — was effective in treating depression.

8. Dance Can Help Bust Stress

If you've had a tough day, have you ever cranked up your favorite tunes and busted a move to blow off some steam? Any type of movement can help bust stress, according to [Mayo Clinic](#). But dance may be particularly good for doing this.

[Research published in *The International Journal on the Biology of Stress*](#), for example, found that DMT also impacted the [cortisol](#) awakening response, a marker of chronic stress, while high intensity aerobic activity did not.

9. Dance Can Help Us Feel More Socially Connected

Social connectedness and interaction is a really important part of mental and physical health. Much research shows that [feeling lonely or socially isolated can have myriad negative health effects](#).

“Dancing is sharing, and when you take class surrounded by other people, you know you all have something in common. You are not here to compete, you are here to enjoy, and there is an amazing feeling that comes with that,” Granger says. “Go take a class, and feel the energy of the room.”