

## 5 Health Benefits of Dancing

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Doesn't this video just make you want to get up out of your seat and get down on the dance floor?



Research shows that more seniors and their caregivers should consider dancing, not only as a fun pastime, but also as a method for keeping their minds and bodies active.

### 5 Ways Dancing Is Good for Your Health

#### 1. Minimizes Symptoms of Depression

A group of Australian researchers found that men and women with mood disorders who participated in a two-week tango instruction program felt less depressed and experienced significant reductions in their levels of stress, anxiety and insomnia.

#### 2. Improves Strength and Balance

A few weeks of salsa dance classes can seriously increase an older adult's strength and balance, according to a study published in the journal *Gerontology*. "Salsa proved to be a safe and feasible exercise program for older adults," say study authors. They also noted the high adherence rate of the program—over 92 percent of participants ended up completing the full eight-week salsa dancing regimen.

#### 3. Reduces Joint Pain and Stiffness

Older adults with knee and hip discomfort may be able to swap their pain medications for dancing shoes, a Saint Louis University (SLU) study concluded. After engaging in a 12-week, low-impact dance program, participants with an average age of 80 years old were able to decrease the amount of pain medication they were taking by 39 percent. Study participants were also able to move around more easily—a key determinant in remaining independent. "Walking just a little more rapidly can make enough of a difference for a person to get across the street more quickly or get to the bathroom faster, which keeps them functional and independent," says study author Jean Krampe, Ph.D., assistant professor of nursing at SLU.

#### 4. Protects Your Heart

People with stable chronic heart failure may derive the same aerobic health advantages from learning how to waltz as they would from more traditional forms of cardiovascular exercise, such as cycling or walking, says a study published in the journal *Circulation*. Unlike other types of cardiovascular exercise, dancing doesn't necessarily require specialized equipment or workout settings, making it a much more accessible option for those looking to lower their blood pressure and cholesterol and maintain a healthy body weight.

#### 5. Defends Against Dementia

When compared to other leisure activities like playing golf, doing crosswords, reading and cycling, dancing appears to offer the best chance of helping stave off dementia. According to a 21-year study led by the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, aging adults who danced regularly had a 76 percent reduced risk for developing dementia. Experts theorize that dancing is beneficial for our brains because it combines cardiovascular exercise with split-second decision making that taxes our neural network, forcing it to create new pathways.

Dancing happens to be a universal form of exercise and recreation as well. Seniors with conditions like Parkinson's disease, dementia, cancer, arthritis, asthma and heart disease can all participate. Research into using dance as a therapy for each of these ailments has unearthed a host of advantages and very few risks. However, it's always important to clear any exercises with a doctor before beginning a new regime, especially for those with pre-existing health conditions.

Consider this your official invitation to dance with your loved one like no one's watching! The best part is that dancing doesn't have to include formal classes or training. Simply play some favorite tunes at home and let the music inspire your movements.

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