

Dancing for health ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I was just wondering if you could tell me some of the benefits of dancing to your wellness? Could you send me some places to get information about dancing benefits?

Answer

Dear Reader,

I hope you're ready to bust a move because dancing is a phenomenal workout for your mind and body! Dancing provides the body with many health benefits, including, but not limited to: increased energy, decreased stress, and improved strength, muscle tone, coordination, and flexibility. Social dancing can be a cardio workout that torches between 200 to 500 calories per hour! The exact number of calories you burn depends on the distance you travel while grooving to the beat as well as physical factors such as height, age, weight, and fitness level. In one study, researchers found that square dancers can cover five miles in a single evening; talk about swinging your partner round and round *and round!*

Dancing can be an aerobic workout and it may contribute to your cardiovascular conditioning depend on how long, how often, and how intensely or vigorously you shake what your mama gave ya. Also, if you find dancing to be a fun activity, it may be a more sustainable exercise than those activities you find less enjoyable. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) ^[2], the benefits of dance (and other aerobic activities) include:

- Decreased risk of coronary heart disease
- Decreased risk of high blood pressure
- Weight management
- Improved functioning of the heart and lungs

The benefits of dancing also allow for it to be incorporated into rehabilitation therapy programs as a form of movement therapy. Movement therapy is used in conjunction with rehabilitation programs. Research has shown that dance has been used as an effective intervention for physical and psychological conditions including anxiety, depression, breast cancer, Parkinson's disease, and dementia (among others). Dance may also be used as part of a rehabilitation

therapy program for its role in maintaining bone health as dancing involves weight-bearing movements of your steps. This means it can help strengthen the bones of your legs and hips, ultimately resulting in healthier bones.

There are also cognitive and emotional benefits to dancing such as improved memory, improved attention, mood elevation, and the opportunity for social interactions! Dancing is a great way for individuals of all ages to make new friends, express their creativity, and enjoy life. Bottom line: dancing is a fun activity that's great for your physical and mental state!

Whatever your preference, there's sure to be a style to get your toes tappin'! Whether it's belly dancing, funk, swing, ballet, jazz, tap, square, hip-hop, the hustle, the tango, or modern dance, classes are popping up all over. For more information you can contact your local gym, YW/YMCA, recreation/community center, or dance studio to see what they offer. If taking a class isn't for you, consider just dancing your cares away to your favorite tunes right at home.

Time to get your groove on,

Alice!

Category:

[Emotional Health](#) ^[3]

[Stress & Anxiety](#) ^[4]

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[Fitness](#) ^[6]

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[Working Out](#) ^[8]

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[Barefoot running](#) ^[12]

[Kickstart for getting healthy eating and exercise plan in gear?](#) ^[13]

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Footer menu

- ▼ [Contact Alice!](#)
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Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/dancing-health>
- [2] <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/phys/types>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/emotional-health>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/stress-anxiety>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/nutrition-physical-activity>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/fitness>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/cardiovascularaerobic-exercise>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/working-out>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/health-benefits-yoga-0>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/exercising-mini-trampolines-and-other-%E2%80%9Ctoys%E2%80%9D>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/swimming-good-weight-loss>
- [12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/barefoot-running>
- [13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/kickstart-getting-healthy-eating-and-exercise-plan-gear>