

Dancing into Health



Dancing can be magical and transforming. It can breathe new life into a tired soul; make a spirit soar; unleash locked-away creativity; unite generations and cultures; inspire new romances or rekindle old ones; and turn sadness into joy.

On a more physical level, dancing can give you a great mind-body workout.

Researchers are learning that regular physical activity in general can help keep your body, including your brain, healthy as you age. Exercise increases the level of brain chemicals that encourage nerve cells to grow. And dancing that requires you to remember dance steps and sequences boosts brain power by improving memory skills.

There has been some promising research in this area, according to Rita Beckford, M.D., a family doctor and spokesperson for the American Council on Exercise. For instance,

a 2003 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that ballroom dancing at least twice a week made people less likely to develop dementia.

“That is huge” says Kristine Knipp, director of the Ballroom Dance Clubs of Metro-Atlanta. “We who enjoy and participate in ballroom dancing have always known the social and health benefits” says Knipp, “But this confirms that it can actually affect one’s quality of life.”

But ballroom dancing is not just a sport or hobby for those with their minds on power aging. One of the great benefits of ballroom and latin dancing is that you can adjust to each individual’s level of activity. “We have some exciting amateur dancers competing, in a few weeks, at a major competition.

Their ages are from the mid-twenties to well into their seventies”, says Knipp “and their past level of activity ranges from marathon runners to previously sedentary – but they are all dancing athletes now.”

According to WebMD, and other Health experts, ballroom and latin dancing abound in

benefits. Dancing can help:

- strengthen bones and muscles without hurting your joints
- tone your entire body
- Improve your posture and balance, which can prevent falls.
- increase stamina and flexibility
- reduce stress and tension
- build confidence
- provide opportunities to meet people
- Ward off illnesses like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, osteoporosis and depression.

So if you’re tired of the treadmill and looking for a fun and even glamorous way to stay fit and healthy, it might be time to kick up your heels!

*Ballroom Dance Clubs
of Metro-Atlanta*

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