

Dancing May Be Key For Senior Health

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Regular physical activity is key for senior health, but older adults don't have to spend their days at the gym to get in their daily dose of exercise. Dancing is a great way to not only get your body moving, but also boost heart, mind and joint health, whether you're moving along with a virtual game or participating in a class at the retirement community.

People around the world have long-stressed the importance of dance, as this activity can be a fun, engaging way to exercise in a social setting. Seniors looking for opportunities to showcase their stepping skills have many options, including hosting a themed dance party for fellow residents, engaging with an interactive gaming system or merely moving to the beat of their favorite tune at their [senior care](#) home.

Doing a jig can save your joints

Seniors suffering from knee or hip pains may benefit from dancing, according to a recent study published in the journal *Geriatric Nursing*. Researchers from Saint Louis University examined the effects of dancing on a group of 34 seniors over the age of 80, and older adults who had arthritis or stiffness of the hips and knees reported significant decreases in pain.

To determine whether dancing specifically was beneficial for seniors, researchers divided them into two groups: one that participated in dancing programs and another that conducted other activities. Those who were in the dancing group reported improved movement and functioning, even months after participation. Jean Krampe, lead author and professor of nursing at Saint Louis University, explained that seniors who danced experienced emotional benefits as well.

"After dancing several months they reported less pain and were able to walk faster," Krampe said, as quoted by American News Report. "... Those in the dance group talked about how much they loved it. It's exercise, but it's fun."

were less likely to fall. According to Reuters, researchers noted that seniors who participated in this form of dance improved their balance by 50 percent. Eliane Gomes da Silva Borges, the lead author of the study, said ballroom moves allow seniors to spin and balance in ways that effectively boost brain and body strength.

"To be able to see the elderly dancing and spinning with autonomy, balance and a cognitive awareness of their space and body helped us understand ways to join useful exercise with a pleasant activity," she said, according to Reuters.

The source noted that participants in this study were all residents of a local [retirement community](#) and led, for the most part, sedentary lives. However, even for those who had not regularly participated in physical activities in the past, the benefits were significant.

Dancing may stave off dementia

Aside from improving physical health, dancing may bolster cognition, potentially reducing one's risk for developing dementia. One report published in The New England Journal of Medicine followed a group of seniors over the age of 75 for 21 years. The study sought to examine how certain activities could build brain functioning and lower seniors' chances for having Alzheimer's disease. Older adults participated in five activities as researchers examined the connection to dementia: reading, bicycling and swimming, crossword puzzles, golf and dancing. Of all five activities, dancing reaped the greatest results, with researchers finding that seniors who danced were 76 percent less likely to develop dementia.

Researchers concluded that participating in leisure activities of any sort may reduce one's risk for developing the condition, but dancing was the only physical activity to which they found a connection.

