

Dancing all the way to fitness

What do salsa, polka, contra, hip-hop, belly, disco, square, swing, shag, lindy, foxtrot, and ballroom have in common? They all can be good for your heart, body, mind and weight! And dance isn't just a form of exercise; it can also be a way to listen to your favorite music, spend time with friends, and meet new people. Research on many types of dance, including aerobic dance, interactive video dance games and traditional dances from various cultures, shows improvements in aerobic power, heart and lung function, lower body muscle endurance, strength, flexibility, balance, agility and gait. Improvements have been seen in men and women of all ages and levels of health and fitness. Dance is thought to be an excellent way to reduce stress and chronic fatigue, improve energy and mood, and increase self-esteem and confidence. People who dance are even at lower risk of dementia!

Dance can be a fun way to burn calories. The faster, longer, and harder that you dance, the more calories you will burn. A 160-pound person doing a rhythmic dance like the waltz or fox trot can burn about 130 calories in 30 minutes. More intense dancing such as salsa will use up twice as many calories, comparable to jogging. If you weigh more, you burn more calories.

Most types of dancing provide a low- impact workout that is friendly to your knees and other joints. Keep your feet close to the ground with dance moves such as swaying, sashaying, or spinning, so you don't pound your joints. Avoid jumping up and down. Another benefit of dancing is the gentle stretching of muscles throughout your body. This stretching can also increase your flexibility.

Dancing can be very low cost, requiring no expensive equipment, and "green" since you can do it just about anywhere and with very little or no electricity.

If you are new to dancing, consider your level of fitness and your personal preferences when choosing a style of dance. Start with a level for beginners and work on balance and flexibility which will help you do the harder moves later. If you feel awkward dancing in front of other people, look for dance videos online, dance programs on cable tv or DVDs at the library or video store. Take classes at a gym or adult education program or local dance organizations. As you grow to be more comfortable with it, look for social clubs or dance nights.

From www.acefitness.org and www.mayoclinic.com

Recipe of the Week : Quinoa , Black Bean and Corn Salad

From: www.wholegrainscouncil.org

serves 4

Dressing:

- 3 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons fresh cilantro or parsley, chopped
- 2 stalks scallions, chopped
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp cumin

Salad:

- 1/4 cup quinoa (rinsed under water) or bulgur
- 1/2 cup chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tomato, seeded and diced
- 1 cup fresh or frozen corn (use three ears if fresh corn)

- 1) Cook quinoa or bulgur in broth for 12-15 minutes, until liquid is absorbed.
- 2) While grain cooks, mix dressing ingredients in a large bowl.
- 3) Add drained and rinsed beans, tomato and corn.
- 4) Cool grain to room temperature, then mix with other ingredients; chill until ready to eat

Nutrition facts:

Calories 274	Total Fat: 8.5g
Saturated Fat: 1g	Dietary Fiber 10g
Protein: 11g	

Tip of the Week Trying to eat less? Choose quality over quantity. One piece of rich gourmet chocolate or a cup of good coffee will be a lot more satisfying than a larger amount of the "cheap" stuff.
--- from Cooking Light magazine