

Dance your way to better health

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(HealthDay)—Two very different studies show that dancing is more than just fun. It can keep your mind sharp and your heart healthy.

The first was done in the United Kingdom and published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

Researchers pooled results from 11 surveys that included a total of 49,000 people. The investigators compared the health effects of walking and dancing, and found that moderate-intensity dancing was associated with a [lower risk](#) of dying from [heart disease](#). Note that it took moderate-intensity activity to bring about these results, so if you're a fan of slow dancing, you'll need to pick up the pace.

The heart-health benefits of dance are likely due to its interval-training-like bouts of high-intensity movement and it being a stress-relieving hobby you can do for life.

While many kinds of dance can make for great calorie-burning cardio, a separate study published in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience* and conducted by researchers at a number of U.S. universities found that learning dance choreography can confer cognitive as well as physical benefits.

Researchers specifically looked at the effects of learning the steps of a country dance and found this can stimulate a key area of the brain and slow down natural brain aging.

Both studies also restated the [positive effects](#) that stem from dance as a social activity, a known brain booster.

While it's easy to simply turn on your favorite tunes and dance around the house, consider joining a dance studio and taking lessons. With all the styles available, from ballroom to ballet, square [dancing](#) to tap, variety will be built in.

More information: The American Council on Exercise has more on [dancing your way](#) to better health.

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