

# THE RHYTHM is gonna get you

A bit of nimble footwork can keep you  
on your toes says Martin Feather

**'You can dance as  
part of a group, with  
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own or take the  
whole family along'**

In those moments when we are alone, we've all done it. A favourite song comes on the radio and our feet start to tap, our hips wiggle and before we even know it, we are dancing – we feel better, life is fun and we smile. Dance is one of the greatest forms of exercise we have. It combines having fun and meeting people with terrific health benefits and with most dance classes being indoors, winter is the perfect time to start.

### **Finding your feet**

With so many different styles there is something for everyone in dancing. You can dance as part of a group, with a partner, on your own or take the whole family along; you can learn complex moves as part of your salsa session or follow simple instructions in square dancing classes; your dance can be a Bollywood workout or a less demanding

waltz evening. The BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* has shown that your age, gender and starting point are irrelevant, and the list on the next page gives some of the types of dance available for you to try. And in case you think being disabled excludes you, there are many opportunities to participate in specialised and integrated dance classes.

If you are uncertain if dancing is for you try a taster class or go along to a dance evening, where there usually is a class before the event so you can learn and try out dances that will happen later that evening. If dancing appeals but you're uncertain which style is for you, experiment by trying a couple of styles. In either case give the class or lessons some time before deciding whether you enjoy dancing or not – often it's the fear of starting something new that puts us off rather than the activity itself. Part of the enjoyment of dancing is making mistakes and smiling at them as you overcome having two left feet!



## The benefits of boogie

- provides opportunities to meet people
- strengthens bones and muscles
- tones your entire body
- improves flexibility and mobility
- improves your posture and balance
- increases your energy and stamina
- helps you relax by reducing mental and physical stress and tension
- builds confidence and your sense of wellbeing
- improves the circulatory system

interaction, confidence to move and sheer fun, and may even be the start of a great friendship. Once hooked, it would take more than a cold or wet day to keep dance lovers from attending their regular session!



### Stepping out

Whether you decide to take some lessons or join a class, look for a teacher who emphasises your abilities and makes dancing enjoyable and fun; avoid being a perfectionist, especially when you are learning, and enjoy the music as well as the movement. To reduce the risk of injury and enable your body to warm up remember to begin with slower,

less demanding rhythms, building up to faster tempos. When you find you are getting tired take a rest and sit out the next dance.

There are literally hundreds of dance classes throughout the country for you to try, many looking for new members. Asking friends is a great place to start your search along with the information board at the checkouts at your local supermarket. You could also try adult education courses, community halls, health clubs and searching the internet. If you used to dance and decide to get back into it, a few practice sessions and lessons often mean you can pick up where you left off. Although you may feel more comfortable going to dancing sessions with a friend or partner, many styles of dance do welcome individuals so being on your own isn't an excuse not to give a dance class a try – a telephone call to the teacher to let them know you are coming can relieve any anxiety.

If the cold, dark winter days and evenings mean that your exercise levels drop off, or even get shelved until the daffodils reappear, or the idea of exercise simply doesn't appeal, dancing could be the answer. Begin by turning up your radio and tapping your toes.

### Dancing styles to try

- Square
- Line
- Folk
- Ballroom
- Bollywood
- Belly
- Salsa
- Flamenco
- Jazz
- Tap
- Modern
- Country
- Ceroc
- Mambo
- Tea

IMAGES: ALAMY AND GETTY IMAGES

### Boogie benefits

If you want to shape up, lift your mood, improve your general wellbeing and give your brain a workout, get dancing. Although the benefits of dance are considerable – see the list above – what makes dance so appealing to many people is that they are simply enjoying themselves. Dancers focus on the great time they are having rather than on 'doing exercise'.

### Dancing off those calories

The number of calories you will burn will depend on the type of dancing you do. The calories below are based on a 70kg person dancing for an hour.

<b>Ballroom dancing</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>Square dancing</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>Belly dancing</b>	<b>380</b>
<b>Salsa</b>	<b>420</b>

People who dance know they are gaining health benefits when they dance but this is less significant than the friends they meet and the chat they share. By doing something you enjoy, you are more likely to keep doing it, and dancing scores highly here. Dancing is about more than the exercise – it's about social