

Dance Yourself Fit



If you are tired of the treadmill and looking for a way to spice up your workouts, consider dance as a way to improve health. According to one study presented by the American College of Sports Medicine, salsa dancing, in particular, improves cardiovascular fitness. Salsa dancing may burn up to 600 calories per hour, and remember...learning to dance can be a fun social experience.

Origins of Salsa Dancing

The sensual, fluid moves of the salsa dance have a 90-year history. Today's salsa dancing is a blend of Latin American and Western influences from Puerto Rico, Cuba and Columbia. The steps are derived from a variety of Latin dances including the cha cha, mambo and rumba. There are variations, however, and today, elements of other dances such as hip hop, flamenco and ballroom are found in contemporary salsa dancing.

Salsa Basics

In salsa dancing, you most often work with a partner; however, there are other forms of salsa dancing as well. Salsa can be danced solo, in a line formation, called *suelta*, and with groups of couples exchanging partners in a circle, known as *Rueda de Casino*.

The salsa is characterized by its sensuous hip movements, expert footwork and rhythmic music. Partners usually face each other and keep the weight on the balls of their feet. There are a few basic steps in the salsa, the most common being the three steps to each four beats, with the steps not always the same in length. Arm movements should be natural, and the upper body stays level and does not move.

Learning to Salsa

There are books, videos and DVDs that will teach you to salsa. In addition, the Internet (YouTube.com) has lessons that will help you learn the basic steps at home. There are also many classes in the community that offer salsa dance lessons for beginners, as well as advanced students.

Word of Advice

Be sure not to swap your dance workout for other high intensity exercise — cardiovascular exercise still needs to be a part of your fitness plan. In addition, if you are salsa dancing at a club, remember not to undermine all of your hard work by splurging on high-calorie drinks and snacks.