

# Dance for Fun and Fitness



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify at least three benefits of dancing as a form of physical activity.
- Recall the physical activity recommendations.
- Recognize dancing as a way to be physically active with friends and family members.
- Recognize how to increase and decrease intensity when doing aerobic activities.
- Name at least three inexpensive ways to be physically active.
- Monitor their exertion during physical activity.

## MATERIALS

- Adequate, clutter-free space
- A music player equipped with a CD player
- The *Shake It Up! Tool Kit Version Music CD*
- Water (provide access to a water fountain or other water sources)
- A watch
- A dry-erase board or large sheets of paper
- Markers
- The *Recommended Minutes of Physical Activity for Adults* handout (p. H – 6)
- The *Physical Activity Scoreboard* handout (p. H – 8)
- The *Physical Activity Pyramid* handout (p. H – 26)
- The *Let's Get Active* handout (p. H – 28)
- The *Physical Activity and Exercise Safety* handout (p. H – 29)
- The *Stretching Exercises* handout (p. H – 30)
- The *Dance for Fun and Fitness* handout (p. H – 31)
- Pens or pencils





## PREPARATION

1. Locate a room or open space that will safely accommodate all participants.
2. Set up the music player with the *Shake It Up! Tool Kit Version Music CD*.
3. Become familiar with the content of each handout prior to implementing the lesson. Photocopy the *Recommended Minutes of Physical Activity for Adults*, *Physical Activity Scoreboard*, *Physical Activity Pyramid*, *Let's Get Active*, *Physical Activity and Exercise Safety*, *Stretching Exercises*, and *Dance for Fun and Fitness* handouts for each participant. If you are teaching this lesson in a series, you may want to reproduce only the handouts that are new to the group.
4. Review the *Dance for Fun and Fitness* handout several times, and develop a fun exercise routine that incorporates movements for slow-, medium-, and fast-paced music.



## WARM-UP ACTIVITY

1. Distribute the *Recommended Minutes of Physical Activity for Adults* handout to each participant, and review the information. Explain to participants that to maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases, adults need at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day. Explain that for most people, greater health benefits can be achieved by doing more physical activity. For example, to help manage body weight and prevent gradual weight gain, adults need 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity on most days of the week. To sustain weight loss, adults need 60 to 90 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day. Note that some people may need to consult with a health care provider before participating in this level of activity.
2. Distribute the *Let's Get Active* handout and pens or pencils to participants. Ask participants to complete the handout.
3. Ask participants to share their answers, and record their responses on the board or sheet of paper for the class to see.
4. Review the list of responses with the class, and use the discussion to introduce the *Dance for Fun and Fitness* lesson. Explain some of the health benefits of dancing. For example, it's great for improving cardiorespiratory fitness, it improves circulation, and it tones muscles in the lower and upper body. Explain that dancing is a fun and easy way to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day.
5. Distribute the *Physical Activity and Exercise Safety* handout, and review it with participants. Engage participants in a warm-up by walking in place and practicing the different arm, leg, and body movements from the dance routine at a relaxed pace for 3 to 5 minutes.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Distribute the *Dance for Fun and Fitness* handout, and review the different arm, leg, and body movements with participants. Show how to individualize intensity by demonstrating how to move from moderate- to vigorous-intensity. Have participants follow along.

- **Big/Small Movements** — Big arm or leg movements require more body motion.

**Demonstrate:** *Marching with knees up high is more strenuous than walking in place.*

- **High/Low Impact** — Moving arms above the heart or bringing both feet off the ground is an example of high impact, while moving the arms below the heart or keeping at least one foot on the ground at a time is an example of low impact.

**Demonstrate:** *Placing arms overhead while moving is more strenuous than placing arms at the waist, and jogging is more strenuous than walking.*

- **Fast/Slow Pace** — Moving quickly requires more work and moving slowly requires less.

**Demonstrate:** *March at a fast and slow pace.*

- **High/Low Intensity** — Walking at a brisk pace with your arms moving is more strenuous than walking casually with your arms at your sides.

**Demonstrate:** *Walking at a brisk pace with your arms moving, and then walking casually with your arms at your sides.*



- **Change in Direction** — Walking forward and backward is more strenuous than walking in place.

**Demonstrate:** *March forward 4 steps, then march backward 4 steps.*

2. Start the music player, and follow the movements in the *Dance for Fun and Fitness* handout.
3. Begin with a series of movements at a low-intensity for 3 to 5 minutes.
4. Gradually increase the intensity to achieve moderately intense dancing for 5 to 10 minutes. Remind participants to pace themselves and use the self-monitoring questions from the *Physical Activity and Exercise Safety* handout.
5. Gradually return to a low-intensity cool-down and maintain it for 3 to 5 minutes.
6. Lead participants through a variety of slow stretches as described in the *Stretching Exercises* handout.

7. Have the participants take a water break and a brief rest.
8. If participants feel like dancing more, repeat the lesson following steps 4 through 6, or try an expansion idea.
9. Conclude the lesson with a discussion about how dancing can be a fun and easy way to maintain a healthy lifestyle and enjoy time with family and friends. Discuss with the participants about opportunities for dancing and exercise dance classes in the local area. Talk with them about creating their own dance classes, such as organizing a class at the community center, encouraging dancing at the next family gathering, or getting together at a friend's house and doing aerobics to their favorite music or exercise video.
10. Next, distribute the *Physical Activity Scoreboard* and *Physical Activity Pyramid* handouts to participants. Encourage participants to use the *Physical Activity Scoreboard* at home to monitor their physical activity progress. Encourage participants to use the *Physical Activity Pyramid* handout to learn easy and fun ways to include physical activity in their daily lives.

## Expansion Ideas

### FREESTYLE DANCING

Ask participants to present and teach their favorite dances (such as Salsa, Electric Slide, Hustle, or a favorite traditional dance). As an alternative, invite a dance instructor to lead a class and teach traditional dances.

### GREATER INTENSITY

Have participants bring two cans of fruits or vegetables from home or buy ankle weights, and demonstrate how adding resistance can increase the intensity of an aerobic activity. Show participants how they can do arm curls and overhead shoulder lifts using canned goods. Mix arm movements and the added resistance with the other dance movements from the *Dance for Fun and Fitness* handout to create a new routine. Remind participants that when using weights it is important to maintain the same range of motion.

### Tips

- Using the *Stretching Exercise* handout as a guide, set up stretching stations throughout the room prior to implementing the Warm-Up Activity. Post the pages using adhesive tape. Have participants rotate to each stretching station.
- Keep dance movements simple and fun.
- Face your participants, and make sure your footwork mirrors the position of their feet. For example, if participants start with their right foot forward, you should start with your left foot forward.
- Include a segment in which participants do their own dance movements to a song.
- Have participants drink water before, during, and after the lesson.
- Invite a representative from YMCA, YWCA, or Parks and Recreation to present the lesson with you.