



There's an unmistakable joy that comes from dancing, whether you're technically trained or lacking in rhythm. It's the experience that can boost your mental and physical health.

Here's what you can gain from moving to the groove:

» **Balance:** Studies show dances including jazz, ballroom and tango can improve balance and motor skills, even among the elderly. This is promising for those with motor-system disorders such as Parkinson's, which is marked by stiff limbs, tremors and impaired coordination. Parkinson's patients who engaged in dance for rhythmic stimulation saw progress in gait and upper extremity function, according to research.

» **Mind and mood:** Dance can reduce stress and release feel-good chemicals in the body. When compared to 11 other physical activities, only dance was linked to reduced dementia risk, based on a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Furthermore, dance may also benefit depression and anxiety.

» **Heart:** Burn calories and get your heart pumping with an upbeat dance. An interval waltz has shown to potentially improve heart and blood vessel function in those with stable chronic heart failure. Weight control can further help your heart: A person weighing 150 pounds can burn 240 calories per hour dancing, on average.

*Dance offers something for everyone.
Find one you like and have a ball.*

Making the Best Medical Care Choices

As patients, we should be involved in our medical care as much as possible. It can sometimes be a complicated process. In fact, patients and their health care providers may make choices that lead to duplicated and unnecessary care, wasting time and health care resources.

An example: MRI scans for back pain. An American College of Physicians study found that patients who had MRIs in the first month of seeking treatment were 8 times more likely to have surgery with a 5-fold increase in medical expenses – but did not recover faster than people who didn't have MRI tests. Even if a test or treatment is shown to benefit some patients, it may not be appropriate for everyone.

The Choosing Wisely campaign supports teaching health care providers and their patients to recognize that health does not always improve with more care. This program has identified tests and procedures that have low value to patients.

Services we should question: annual EKGs, bone density screening, MRI scans, Pap smears for women who have undergone a hysterectomy, and antibiotics for sinusitis. You can learn more at ChoosingWisely.org.

How well do you work with your provider?

- ☐ I ask questions about my diagnoses until I understand the problem.
- ☐ I ask questions about prescribed tests and treatments until I understand them.
- ☐ I follow my treatment plan (e.g., taking medications and recording symptoms).
- ☐ I recognize that I'm the one in charge of my health care.



Quality health care is the right care at the right time for the best results.

“It always seems **impossible** until it's **done**.”
— Nelson Mandela

Go on a Pasta ADVENTURE

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Once upon a time, noodles were made only from wheat flour. Now, there are more choices to suit a variety of nutritional needs. Try these:

» **Grain pasta:** Try options made from quinoa, buckwheat, corn and other gluten-free grains.

Note: Sometimes noodles are made with a mixture of grains and may contain wheat. If you can't eat wheat, read ingredient lists carefully.



» **Legume noodles:** These gluten-free and nutritionally dense noodles – made from lentils, chickpeas, black beans or a combination – have more protein than white and whole-grain pasta. They have more fiber than white pasta, but about the same amount of fiber as whole-grain pasta. They have a pleasant bean-like flavor and marry well with any rich sauce.

» **Rice noodles:** From vermicelli to fusilli, noodles made from white or brown rice are easy to find. These high-carb noodles have less fiber than wheat noodles, but are easier to digest (rice is lower on the allergen scale vs. wheat). Their mild flavor suits soups and Asian noodle dishes.



» **Vegetables, too?** Oh, yes. Put about any long vegetable (think zucchini, sweet potato, carrot and cucumber) through a kitchen tool called a spiralizer. They make a lovely base for salads and hold pasta sauce quite well.

Alcohol and Heart Disease: Pros and Cons

The link between moderate alcohol use and heart protection is complicated. Alcohol is a drug that affects the body in several ways, and each body may react differently to it.

The concept that moderate drinking (no more than 2 drinks a day for men or 1 drink a day for women) helps lower heart disease risk presents 2 arguments:

1. Studies have been observational only and do not connect a cause and effect with alcohol use and heart health.
2. Light-to-moderate drinkers who also have heart-healthy habits may already have less cardiovascular risk. So, if you are thin, eat a healthful diet, don't smoke and have no family history of heart disease, it's hard to say whether health habits or drinking alcohol is protecting your heart.

For people with a moderate-to-high risk for heart disease or low HDL cholesterol, and no history of alcohol abuse, you might benefit from moderate drinking. But you can get similar benefits with regular aerobic exercise, watching your weight and eating well.

If you don't drink, many doctors say there's no need to start for your heart. Discuss this with your health care provider.

Drinks defined – Each of these drinks contains about 14 grams of pure alcohol: a 12-oz. regular beer, 5 oz. of table wine, 3 to 4 oz. of fortified wine, 1.5 oz. of brandy, and 1.5 oz. of 80-proof spirits.



Asperger's Syndrome

Autism, once considered a very rare disorder, now affects at least 1 in 68 children. Since there is no cure, the percentage of adults who are autistic is probably just as high. Many people on the autistic spectrum have an intellectual disability.

Those who have average or above average IQs – almost half of the autistic population – are often referred to as having **Asperger's Syndrome (AS)**. More males than females seem to be affected, but it's possible that AS is underdiagnosed in girls and women. Many professionals now place AS under the umbrella term **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)**.



April is Autism Awareness Month.



Some common features of AS:

- **Communication** – discomfort with eye contact; difficulty understanding gestures, facial expression, tone of voice or humor.
- **Social interaction** – avoidance of people, lack of awareness of social norms (e.g., knowing when to take turns or how to dress appropriately for the situation).
- **Restricted focus** – rigid routines, intense interest in 1 subject, sensitivity to certain stimuli (e.g., bright lights, loud sounds, food or clothing textures).

Learning more about AS, or obtaining a professional diagnosis, can help people with AS and their loved ones better understand what is going on. There are also support groups for people with AS as well as their partners. – *Eric Endlich, PhD*



Smart Moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/18V4tools.

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