

# Dance

*A guide for people with heart conditions*



**ACPICR**

Association of Chartered Physiotherapists  
In Cardiovascular Rehabilitation

Dance comes in many different styles. For example; line dancing, ballroom dancing, swing. It can be done as an individual, in pairs or in a group setting. It can be sociable within a class or simply moving at home.

## What are the specific benefits?

- Can increase or maintain fitness, strength and balance
- Easy to do at home or in a more formal setting
- Enjoyable and fun
- Improves your confidence and well-being
- Motivates you to exercise regularly
- Offers variety with different styles and social contacts



## When could I start?

It is very important to attend a cardiovascular rehabilitation (CR) programme and tell the team of your wish to return to, or start, a particular dance style as they may be able to tailor your CR exercise programme to give you the appropriate skills and knowledge.

Different types of dance require different levels of fitness and recovery. If you have had open heart surgery or a pacemaker fitted recently you may need to avoid dances that involve pushing/pulling your arms until things have healed. This may take 4-6 weeks, or longer.

When you start depends on what type of dance you intend to do, your current level of physical fitness as well as your general health. Your CR exercise professional will advise you when they think you are ready.



## How can I get started?

Find a style of dancing you would like to try and then find out a bit more about what it involves physically. Perhaps watch a class or video to see the intensity of the dancing.

Make sure you know what is a safe intensity level for you to reach during your exercise.

As with any activity, start low and go slow. Perhaps start with slower classes, take a rest in between dances and dance for a shorter time.

## What about warm up and cool down?

Your dance session should always include a warm up and cool down. Ideally 15 minute warm up and then a 10 minute cool down. The length of the warm up and cool down could be shorter depending on the length of time you are going to dance for, as well as the overall intensity.

Start with a slower piece of music, then progress to the faster styles in the middle of the workout. A gentle walk may be more convenient as a warm up or cool down.

*Stop exercising if you experience any chest pain, palpitations, dizziness or light-headedness. If the symptoms do not go away promptly with rest and/or GTN spray/tablets seek medical advice as soon as possible.*

## How should I feel?

Listen to your body and think about how it compares with how you feel during CR.

When you are doing exercise, it is normal to feel:

- Slightly sweaty
- Warm or slightly flushed
- Your breathing is deeper and faster, but you can still talk
- Your heart beating faster

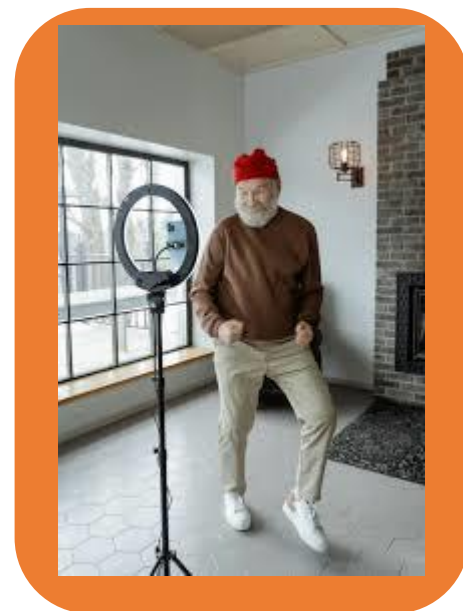
It is fine to feel that you are exerting yourself as long as you are not struggling.

When dancing to music you need to keep in time with the tempo or beat. If you are finding the dance too challenging you could make your movements smaller and/or don't use your arms. This will reduce the intensity.

You may want to sit out some parts to allow some recovery. If you need to take a break, try to keep your feet moving by walking on the spot. Working hard then suddenly stopping may cause dizziness.

Some dance styles are more demanding e.g. those that have fast steps, lots of bounce/jumping or large arm movements. These styles may be better introduced once you have improved your fitness levels

If you feel extremely tired following exercise you may have worked too hard, for too long or the style may have been too demanding for you.



## Other things to consider

- Make sure you listen to your body throughout. It is easy to get carried away with the beat of the music.
- Exercise only when you are feeling well
- Dress appropriately
- Don't exercise straight after eating a large meal
- Remember to take a bottle of water with you
- Ensure you have taken your medications as prescribed.



**Stop exercising if you experience any chest discomfort, palpitations, dizziness or light-headedness. If the symptoms do not go away promptly with rest and/ or your GTN spray/tablets, seek medical advice as soon as possible.**

This guidance is based on available evidence and expert opinion.

Produced by the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Cardiovascular Rehabilitation

This leaflet is not intended to replace the advice that your doctor or cardiovascular rehabilitation team give you based on their expert knowledge of your condition.

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