

5 fun ways to

Get Your Heart Pumping – from A to Z

Aerobic activity is healthy for your heart, your weight and even your mind. Experts recommend getting at least 30 minutes on most days of the week – 60 minutes would be even better. What is aerobic activity? Anything that makes you sweat a little and gets your heart to beat faster. Make it fun and you'll be more likely to just do it!

1. Go easy on your body with low-impact aerobics.

Maybe you hate running and can't dance. Maybe you have problems with your knees, hips or ankles. Don't worry – you can still enjoy aerobic activity. Look for low or no impact classes, like water or chair aerobics. You may find them at a local college, the YMCA or community recreation program. These classes are just right for folks with arthritis or older joints.

2. Glide your way to fitness with ballroom dance.

Learn to dance with your local "stars"! Take a ballroom dancing class at your nearby recreation department or fitness center. Ballroom dance isn't just for weddings. It can be a wonderful way to get your heart pumping with your sweetheart. Give it a whirl. You'll probably use muscles you didn't know you had!

3. Take a step to better health with square dance.

Gather up some friends and give square dancing a do-si-do. While you twist and turn, you'll keep your heart healthy and your bones strong. Following the calls also keeps minds sharp, helping to fight age-related memory loss. To find a square dance club in North Carolina, go to www.ncfederation.org/.

4. Take a fun walk with music or friends.

Walking doesn't have to be boring. There are lots of ways to pick up the pace and make it part of a daily routine. Music is always nice. Podcasts or books on tape can provide mental stimulation along with the physical activity. Try a new route and bring a human friend along for a chat. Or, enjoy the quiet company of a furry friend.

5. Heat up your dance steps with Zumba®.

Increase your heart rate to the pulse of a Latin rhythm. Zumba® is so much fun that it is advertised as a party rather than a workout! You will dance to the joyful beat of music from around the world. The dance steps from salsa, merengue and reggae are easy to follow. Check it out on YouTube or pick up a DVD. Then try it at a local YMCA or dance studio.

