

ACTIVITY 1

DANCING TO THE BEAT

QUICK SUMMARY

Does your family like to dance? In this activity, you will work together to choreograph your own music video—specially designed to give you a workout!

GET STARTED

Begin by dancing along to the *Stay Healthy* music video and get your heart pumping. Challenge your family to show off their favourite dance moves and incorporate new ones as you try to move your body as much as possible. As you do, encourage everyone to pay attention to how their body feels.



When the song is over, share your observations with each other. How did your body feel as you were dancing? You should feel like you just exercised!

LEARN WHY

It shouldn't be a surprise that dancing counts as exercise. Exercise—or physical activity—is defined as any activity that involves moving your body. Depending on your moves, dancing can work your body's cardiovascular system (heart and lungs), skeletal system (bones), and muscular system—which are the three main types of physical activity.

The World Health Organization recommends that we get 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day in order to be our healthiest selves and reduce the risk of developing noncommunicable diseases.

Noncommunicable diseases (or NCDs) are diseases that are not contagious. They are normally caused by lifestyle choices such as poor nutrition and lack of exercise, but they can also be influenced by genetic, physiological, and environmental factors. Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease are three of the most common NCDs.

The 60 minutes of daily physical activity recommended to reduce your risk of developing NCDs does not all have to be completed at the same time. In fact, it can be much easier to fit exercise into your day when it's broken into smaller segments. Therefore, dancing can be the perfect activity. You can move to different songs (or the same song over and over) throughout the day.

APPLY

Work with your family to create new choreography for the *Stay Healthy* music video. Try to include moves that are inspired by each category below so you work several of your body’s main systems. Some sample exercises have been included for you, but be creative and see if you can transform them into dance moves that work better with the song’s lyrics or beat.

- **Aerobic Moves:** Also known as “cardio,” aerobic exercise is any kind of cardiovascular activity that increases your breathing and heart rate. Other than dancing, examples include:
 - Activities like running, jogging, karate, swimming, jumping rope, hiking, skateboarding, rollerblading, swimming, gymnastics, etc.
 - Exercises like jumping jacks, butt kicks, high knees, skaters, chair marching, arms circles, clapping or stomping, and more.

Not sure how to make these into a dance move? How about doing jumping jacks while you also wiggle your arms to the rhythm of the song? Or rollerblading so that your feet glide to the beat? Be creative! Any dance move that makes your heart and lungs work more than usual can count as an aerobic move!

- **Bone-Strengthening Moves:** Any activity where you bear weight or face resistance is good for your bones. Other than dancing, examples include:
 - Activities like playing tennis and other racquet sports, jumping on a trampoline, swimming, jumping rope, skipping, running, walking, gymnastics, rock climbing, martial arts, ball games like football or rugby.
 - Exercises like climbing stairs, push-ups, squats, lunges, bicep curls with assistive devices, arm or leg wall pushes, and more.

TIPS FOR DANCING WITH A FAMILY MEMBER WHO HAS A DISABILITY:

- **Learning Disabilities, ADD, ADHD:**
 - Count the beats as you dance
 - Provide a home base to self-monitor your position
 - Use coloured rubber bands on each hand and leg to help identify which body part to move
 - Try the exercise without music first
- **ASD and other PDD:**
 - Use colourful props for additional motivation
 - Provide extra demonstration and do the exercises together
 - Consider playing the *Stay Healthy* music at a lower volume
 - Relate exercises to a favourite movie, cartoon character, game, etc.
 - Keep directions to movement tasks simple and clear
- **Emotional Disturbance:**
 - Praise positive, non-aggressive responses to movements
 - Create a movement space that feels safe (e.g., consider room size)
 - Work with easy movement activities that can build confidence through quickly-achieved success
- **Hearing, Speech, or Language Impairment:**
 - Expand sign language actions into dance phrases
 - Encourage movement through feeling the beat on the ground or with instruments

Not sure how to make these into a dance move? Try pushing your legs against a wall to the beat of the song or climbing stairs while also swinging your body to the rhythm. Any exercise that puts some resistance against your body counts as a dance move if you're also moving along to the music!

- **Muscle-Strengthening Moves:** Exercises that strengthen your muscles tend to focus on one major muscle group at a time, such as:
 - Arms and Upper Body: Push-ups, monkey bars, wheelbarrow walks, crab walks, wall pushes, tossing a lightweight medicine ball, cartwheels, the superman, seated crutch presses, front/side arm raises, arm circles, balloon/ball squeezes, etc.
 - Core: Planks, cartwheels, crab walks, sit-ups, captain's chair, zombie twists, and more
 - Legs and Lower Body: Jumping jacks, lunges or walking lunges, squats, crab walks, the superman, pliés, bridges, toe/leg raises, marching legs, leg circles, ankle rolls, and more.

Not sure how to make these into a dance move? Consider moving your upper body to the beat in between every sit up, or squatting to the rhythm while also moving your arms to the music. If you can coordinate your movements to the music you hear, all muscle-strengthening moves can become dance moves!

Once your choreography is complete, play the *Stay Healthy* song and run through your new dance routine several times as a family. Can you feel your muscles, bones, and heart working? You're exercising!

**Tip:* Never heard of some of the exercises above? A quick Internet search can provide images and video tutorials.

LOOKING FORWARD

Dance through *Stay Healthy* as often as you'd like for quick movement bursts to help you work up to your 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

- Make movement visual with balls, lights, claps, or exaggerated movements
- Provide visual demonstration and physical guidance as well as extra practice
- **Intellectual/Cognitive Disabilities:**
 - Keep movements simple and concrete
 - Use props to for a multi-sensory approach (e.g., scarves, hula hoops, balloons)
- **Orthopedic and Physical Impairment:**
 - Consider using the floor/mat or incorporate supportive devices (e.g., wheelchair, cane, crutch, walker)
 - Encourage the use of arms and torso to explore range of motion and energy exertion (e.g., extend upper body movements by using props such as scarves or stretchy fabrics)
- **Visual Impairment:**
 - Provide a safe, obstacle free dance space
 - Give clear verbal description of movement tasks by describing movement and counting steps
 - Use floor textures to help direct the use of space
 - Use touch and shape to set the tone for movement (e.g., kick your foot forward like you're kicking a soccer ball)



In addition to counting your number of daily active minutes, your family could also experiment with other ways to measure, track, and increase your physical activity. For instance:

- Track your resting heart rate compared to your after-dancing heart rate. In other words: count how many times your heart beats in one minute after you've been sitting for a few minutes versus how many times your heart beats in one minute right after dancing. The more your heart rate increases, the more it is working!
 - To easily measure your heart rate, find your pulse in one of two places:
 - On your neck: Run your fingers about halfway down your neck on either side of your windpipe until you can feel your pulse (e.g., a throbbing or beating sensation).
 - On your wrist: Slide your fingers down from the base of your thumb until you can feel your pulse.
 - Then count how many times you feel your pulse beat in 30 seconds, and multiply this number by two to get your heart rate.
- Keep an eye on the number of steps you get each day with the help of a pedometer, activity tracker, or smart phone. Can you increase this number each week?
- Think about your mood before and after dancing. Taking care of your mental health is as important as your physical health...and they impact each other! Short bursts of being active have been proven to increase our alertness, energy, and help our mood. It can also reduce stress. So next time you've danced, think about how you feel both inside and out...and if needed, edit your choreography so it's even more fun.

Don't forget to encourage and praise any length of time or type of dance move your family does. Dance is unique to each individual. It doesn't have to be perfect as long as you're moving!

