

# Is Line Dancing Good for Seniors?

Written by [Brian Sheridan](#) in [Line Dancing](#)

When you go to a local country bar or country dancing venue, it is common to see seniors enjoying themselves. Along with line dancing being a fun activity, it has many other benefits for seniors. I was curious about this and decided to research it, read on to explore some of the interesting facts I discovered about it!



**Seniors that line dance enjoy benefits to their physical health, mental health as well as their emotional health and general well-being. Research shows that line dancing improves cardiovascular function, bone strength, and brain function. But also fosters the happiness that results from the social connection of friendships made while line dancing and the increase in self-confidence from gaining mastery over**

## dancing.

All these benefits seem to combine to give elderly folks who line dance a better quality of life and improved mood that overflows into other areas of life, fostering good life and health choices.

While these things may be obvious, research has revealed some surprising and very interesting things about how an activity like line dancing can really benefit the elderly. The importance of staying active can't be understated. And as a way to stay active, it truly is what the "doctor ordered" for many getting up there in age.

## What are the Health Benefits of Line Dancing for Seniors?

As we age there is a natural decline in our overall strength—we lose body muscle-mass. Our balance and coordination aren't what they used to be.

[Published research](#) has shown that "Dancing is a mode of physical activity that may allow older adults to improve their physical function, health, and well-being." There were many studies that indicated that older adults can significantly improve their aerobic power, improve muscle endurance in the lower body, improve strength and flexibility, balance, agility, and gait – yes, all through dancing!

Further evidence suggested that seniors who line dance might improve bone-mineral content in the lower body and muscle power, as well as reduce the prevalence of falls and improve cardiovascular health.

So the health benefits are obvious. Dancing is a great way to fight our body's natural decline. Line dancing is a great form of exercise for the senior community to improve strength and muscle function, increase balance and flexibility as well as improve cardiovascular and heart health.

Line Dancing can:

- Increase Aerobic Power
- Improve Bone Strength (bone-mineral content)
- Increase Balance & Flexibility (reduce fall risk)
- Increase Muscle Mass (reduce pain & discomfort)

A friend of mine, Sandy, who tried out country dancing and line dancing starting about 5 years ago after losing her husband very much agrees about not only health benefits but also the benefit to the mind. She also enjoys the connection that she has developed with the people and recognizes how good it is for her, even making a long drive every time to be able to come. But speaking of the mind...

## Does Mental Health Improve with Line Dancing?

*The Plasticity of our neural network.*

Along with the decline of our **physical health** as we get older is also the **loss of mental acuity**, and for some of us, the threat of developing dementia or even Alzheimers looms on the horizon. As I researched this a study kept being cited from the New England Journal of Medicine. The study "Leisure Activities and the Risk of Dementia," was conducted with Seniors, 75 years and older and went on for 21-years! It focused on monitoring rates of

dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, and sought to see if **physical** or **cognitive** recreational activities had any impact on their aging and mental health. The findings proved super note-worthy.

## ***Leisure Activities and the Risk of Dementia – The Study***

This is a summary of the **21-year study** and where they focused their effort. Keep reading for the crazy finding that has to do with **line dancing!**

### **Cognitive Activities Studied:**

- Reading books
- Writing for pleasure
- Doing crossword puzzles
- Playing cards
- Playing musical instruments

### **Physical Activities Studied:**

- Playing tennis
- Golf
- Swimming
- Bicycling
- **Dancing**
- Walking for exercise
- Housework

The physical activities, of course, all provided cardiovascular benefits but really offered no protection against dementia. But there was one surprising exception: the one physical activity that did reduce the occurrence of dementia was **frequent dancing!** Here are the findings:

- Reading – 35% reduced risk of dementia
- Bicycling and swimming – 0%
- Doing crossword puzzles at least four days a week – 47%
- Playing golf – 0%
- **Dancing frequently – 76%.** – Far & away the most successful combatant to dementia of all cognitive or physical activities in the study.

The cognitive benefits discovered have to do with our neuronal synapses,

our neural pathways, and in general the “**neuroplasticity**” of our brain. Our brain rewires itself based on its use! The study showed that those having greater cognitive reserve and increased complexity of neuronal synapses were far more unlikely to succumb to dementia.

Our brain constantly rewires its neural pathways, **as needed**. If it doesn't need to, then it won't. This is truly a “use-it-or-loose-it” thing. As I read the study findings, I still wondered: “But, why line dancing?” It does obviously challenge our brains to focus, as we try to memorize what step to do while listening to the music and beat. I am just guessing, but I wonder if it isn't the fun and social aspect of it that provides motivation and momentum to be doing something that, then also requires focus, concentration and in turn stimulates that grey matter!

## **Osteoporosis and the Benefits of Line Dancing**

Osteoporosis is one of those silent maladies that come on with age. While there are many things you can do to help, dancing, in particular, is a great activity because of the impact of your feet on the floor. An article on the Royal Osteoporosis Society's website explains this very well. It states that the two kinds of exercise that are good for our bones are:

- **weight-bearing exercise with impact** and
- **muscle-strengthening exercise**

The **weight-bearing exercise with impact** seems to help the most. You are already weight-bearing just by standing and walking. It's that extra jolt that maintains and builds more strength. The kind of jolts that happen in line dancing! And it's a moderate, not high impact exercise. With dancing, it's not too little and not too much. But, just enough to make a great difference.

The article also mentions that variety is good for bones. Moving in different directions and at different speeds. With line dancing the variety is endless.

Now, you might be thinking you should slow down if you have indeed received a diagnosis of osteoporosis. But the contrary is actually true—you should exercise more rather than less. If you actually have broken bones you might obviously need to modify the kinds of exercise you choose.

## **The Emotional Benefits of an Activity like Line Dancing**

Besides all the physical and mental benefits of line dancing. The general sense of well being emotionally is also a great result. There is nothing like making good social connections, developing great and lasting friendships and also growing your confidence in regards to a skill like line dancing. And all these things are commonly what elderly people enjoy that line dance on a regular basis.

There is another study that followed thirty women over the age of 60 who line dance that is particularly noteworthy. The women were interviewed to see what line dancing meant to them. Their response was an obvious thumbs up. The positive effect and how it was a catalyst for personal development was obvious. Line dancing for sure has more than just physical benefits. One woman even stated: **“Life without line dancing and the other activities would be too dreadful to imagine.”**

## **A Few Tips for Seniors that Want to Start Line Dancing?**

Start off slow if you're new to it all. I have made a pretty comprehensive list of a lot of the [beginning and popular line dances](#). Watch the YouTube videos I've included and learn some right at home. This way you'll be ready when you go to the bar or community center where there's line dancing. The other advice I have is to pick a safe saloon or bar. Check out their yelp reviews and ask around. Find a place that is well lit at night and has a good crowd but that isn't too big and rowdy. A couple of places that I know are great for this

would be The Ranch in Anaheim (Wednesday, Friday-Sunday, not Thursday) or the [Gaslamp Restaurant and Bar](#) on Thursday nights. See another post of mine that gives some more information about the [15 Best Country Bars for Dancing in Orange County](#).

## **Line Dance Classes and Lessons for Seniors in Orange County California**

While I mainly have benefited from free lessons at a saloon, there are of course classes and that is another great way to get involved with line dancing on a regular basis, learn new dances, improve your skills and make new friends. A great local instructor who specifically gives classes for people over 50 is Carrie Wojciechowski. [Click here](#) to go to the Meet Up page and find out more about her beginner line dance class for people 50+!

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If you are interested in studying the benefits of dancing for seniors further, here is a summary of the 21-year long study from Stanford University that did a good job summarizing the findings: [Use It or Lose It: Dancing Makes](#)

[\*You Smarter\*](#). For a deeper dive into the actual study here is a link to the New England Journal of Medicine article: [\*Leisure Activities and the Risk of Dementia in the Elderly\*](#).

I'm the owner of CDT. I live in Fullerton, California, and enjoy country dancing with my friends at least once a week.