



Welcome to PhysioBiz, with healthcare advice and information you can trust and rely on, brought to you by the South African Society of Physiotherapy!

It's the month of love, and we hope you danced the night away on Valentine's Day!

How are you feeling now? A little stiff, perhaps... an ache in the middle of the back... a clicking sound in the hip... a knee that isn't happy about climbing the stairs...

Dance is a wonderful way to express joy and love, to celebrate, to share and socialise. It's also a great way to improve your general fitness, to boost musculoskeletal health, to regain flexibility and enhance to your balance.

But if, in your enthusiasm, you overdo it on your first outing, you may need to book an appointment with your physiotherapist (no need to see your general practitioner first, a physiotherapist is a first-line practitioner: that means you can consult one without a referral and he or she will be able to assess, diagnose and treat or refer you as appropriate).

Ideally, your physiotherapist would prefer that you don't do too much and cause yourself harm going dancing for the first time in ages – that way, you're likely to keep dancing and enjoy regaining fitness!

To avoid discomfort with dancing or any other new physical activity, your physiotherapist advises:

- **Know your own body**

Play to your strengths rather than fighting your weaknesses – you want to enjoy whatever exercise you do and not feel daunted by it. Do you have a strong upper body but weak legs? Were you the child who loved running at school? Is swimming the best thing, where you feel weightless and pain-free? The more you enjoy it, the more chance you are of sticking to it.

- **Foresee potential problems**

If you've had ankle injuries before, don't start with learning intricate little dance steps that place extraordinary demands on your ankles. If your shoulder creaks whenever you lift heavy shopping, take steps to avoid shoulder injuries

while exercising. This is where a consultation with your physiotherapist is a good plan – he or she will be able to assess your physical status and suggest a fitness activity or strategy for you.

- **Know your limits**

Even upping your walking distance from the 200 metres between one shop and another at the mall to three kilometres can have an impact on your body, let alone going for a half marathon or starting a programme that includes single leg squats! Don't push yourself too hard at first.

That's another reason why going out dancing regularly, or dancing around your living room, is a great start to getting fit – you can 'sit one out' as soon as you start to feel a little wobbly in the legs or creaky in the knees. Don't try to beat your body into submission; start slow and build up gradually.

- **Be aware of your body in motion**

As you exercise, whatever it is you're doing, be alert to the aches, the twinges, the pulls, the little pains. Stop if anything feels actively painful. Rest, don't do the same thing for a day, try it again. If the pain continues, consult your physiotherapist.

- **Get help quickly**

If pain or discomfort from a session of dancing or any other kind of exercise persists for 24 hours or more, if your function has been limited or changed in any way, get to your physiotherapist quickly. Early intervention is a good idea, as it may mean less downtime, less extensive treatment and less discomfort.

See you on the dance floor!

Please go to www.saphysio.co.za to "Find a Physio" in your area