Dance for Parkinson's

Dance is a wonderful way to socialise and stay active with Parkinson's. It is not only a fun and engaging activity but also an effective therapeutic approach for improving physical, emotional, and social wellbeing.

Why dance?

Benefits of dancing for Parkinson's
The evidence supports the use of dance as a therapeutic intervention for Parkinson's, offering both physical and emotional benefits. Research on dance and Parkinson's has shown promising results in improving both physical and cognitive functions for people with the condition.

Research indicates that dance can positively impact the quality of life for people with Parkinson's by reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, and increasing overall wellbeing.

Studies have demonstrated that dance, particularly styles like Argentine tango and ballroom dancing, can improve motor symptoms such as balance, gait, and overall motor experience. For example, a systematic review found that dance interventions modestly reduced motor disease severity and improved balance. Dance has also been linked to cognitive improvements and enhanced social interaction. Participating in dance can help with cognitive functions and provide a social outlet, which is beneficial for mental health.

Studies have shown that dance programs are feasible and well-received by individuals with Parkinson's, suggesting that they are a viable form of therapy.

Longitudinal studies suggest that regular participation in dance can lead to sustained improvements in physical and cognitive functions over time.

Sensuality and ageing through dance has also been studied in people living with Parkinson's.

What should I know before I start?

Dance is for everyone, regardless of skill level
People with Parkinson's don't need to be expert dancers to benefit. Many dance programs designed for people with Parkinson's cater to beginners and adapt to different levels of mobility. Programs like *Dance for Parkinson's* offer accessible options for participants of all abilities.

It's best to start slowly
It's important to start with beginner-friendly classes and gradually build up stamina and confidence. Some dance forms, like ballroom dancing, may involve slow, controlled movements, making them suitable for individuals in the earlier stages of Parkinson's.

Consult with your care team
People with Parkinson's need to discuss starting a dance program with their care team to ensure it's safe and appropriate for their current physical condition.

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Specialised Parkinson's dance classes
Many dance programs (online or in person) have been specifically tailored to the needs of those with Parkinson's. These classes often focus on improving motor skills, balance, and coordination in a supportive and inclusive environment. Examples include Tango for Parkinson's, which has been shown to benefit balance and gait, and Dance for Parkinson's, which offers a variety of dance styles designed to be adaptable for Parkinson's participants.

Consistency is key
Like any form of exercise, the benefits of dance are most pronounced with regular participation. People should aim to participate in dance classes consistently to fully experience the physical and mental health benefits.

Enjoy the social aspect
One of the greatest advantages of group dance classes is the social support. People with Parkinson's often face emotional challenges, and the camaraderie and sense of community found in dance classes can provide meaningful emotional and social benefits.

Dance may slow disease progression
While dance won't cure Parkinson's, the physical and mental engagement associated with regular dance practice can help manage symptoms, slow the progression of the condition, and improve quality of life.

Infosheet kindly reviewed by Dance for Parkinson's Australia (DPA). DPA provides high-quality services to people living with Parkinson's disease (PD), partners, carers, friends, and the broader community of seniors. Established in Australia in 2013, their goal is to provide opportunities to improve the quality of life and encourage arts, health and wellbeing in creative ageing. For people living with Parkinson's disease, rigorous dance classes led by trained professional teaching artists are becoming internationally acknowledged as an important, beneficial, movement-based therapeutic intervention supported by published research. www.danceforparkinsonsaustralia.org

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