

“EINSTEIN AGING STUDY” - Ballroom Dance Can Protect Against Dementia!

For twenty-one-year years, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City objectively measured mental acuity of senior citizens to monitor rates of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. The study, funded by the National Institute on Aging and published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (June 19, 2003), revealed the surprising fact that frequent ballroom dancing was the only physical activity to offer any protection against dementia.

A group of 469 men and women were studied between the years 1980 and 2001. Each member detailed the frequency of participation in six brain stimulating hobbies; reading, writing for pleasure, doing crosswords, playing musical instruments, taking part in group discussions and playing board games and 11 physical activities including: ballroom dancing, team sports, swimming and bicycling.

The research team developed a scale to assess frequency of activities each week. For each beneficial activity, the risk reduction was related to how often it was performed. For example, people who did crosswords four days a week had a 47% lower risk of dementia than people who only did puzzles once a week. During the course of the study, 124 people developed dementia, 61 developed Alzheimer's disease, 30 vascular dementia (strokes), 25-mixed dementia and eight had other types of dementia.

The researchers found that people who took part in intellectually stimulating hobbies such as reading, playing board games or musical instruments demonstrated a reduced risk of dementia. The researchers found no significant association between physical activities and the risk of dementia – except for ballroom dancing. **The amazing 76% risk reduction from frequent participation in ballroom dancing by 130 avid dancers was the highest score of all hobbies and physical activities measured in the study.**

Dr. Joe Verghese, assistant professor of neurology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, New York, theorized that **the requirements of ballroom dancing** - remembering steps, moving in precise time to music and adapting to the movements of one's partner – are mentally demanding exercises. Therefore, **ballroom dancing offers both physical and mental stimulation.**

Dr. Susanne Sorensen, head of research at the **Alzheimer's Society**, said “this research strengthens the use-it-or-lose-it school of thought that states that complex brain activity can build up a brain reserve that may protect people from Alzheimer's disease in later life.” She warned that “people also need to remain physically active and that this research should not be taken as a recommendation to concentrate on cerebral exercise only.”

If you want to grow old gracefully, keeping yourself intellectually stimulated and physically active can help. Ballroom dancing may help you to be both intellectually stimulated and physically active.

Subjects with scores in the highest third on the cognitive-activity scale had a risk of dementia that was 63 percent lower than that among subjects in the lowest third. Fitness, both mental and physical, often begins with one's state of mind. Mental acuity comes from mental exercise and if you're ballroom dancing, you're participating in living as opposed to engaging in sedentary

activities like watching TV. Among mind stimulating activities, ballroom dancing is unique in that it also provides beneficial physical exercise.

Experts say it's a good idea to engage in activities that stimulate your brain throughout your life. They also emphasize the need for exercise. Many people are getting the message. That's one reason we see increasing numbers of people of all ages having the time of their lives on dance floors all over the country. **USA DANCE urges everyone to KEEP THEIR BRAIN ALIVE AND THEIR BODY FIT BY BALLROOM DANCING FREQUENTLY.**