

# Dance yourself fit!

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**A**s a trainer, I search for ways to help clients stay fit and motivated between our sessions. Many female clients ask about the workout value from dance classes. So off I went to Zumba and belly dancing classes for a first hand experience. Each represents different dance styles, both provide cardiovascular and strengthening with a high fun factor. Requirements: like to dance and have fun. Being a triathlete, I have high expectations, but in this arena I am outside of my comfort zone.

## Group class benefits

- Regular schedules hold you accountable to attend
- Classes provide instructor energy, variety of movement, great music, and camaraderie
- More economical than one-on-one personal training; often offered at health clubs and private studios without membership fees.

## Zumba

I was prepared for Zumba to feel like an aerobics class, but off the top it was a sizzling hot Latin dance party. Described as 'exercise in disguise' it's the next generation of aerobics: combining interval-based training and Latin dance steps in a cool new way. Movements work the whole body, great for weight loss.

Instructor energy is key. Ashley Seaman enthusiastically led us through a blend of salsa, merengue and hip-hop moves to groovy music that keeps you moving. The all-ladies class had women of all ages and varying fitness levels. Start with a basic class.

**Bottom line:** I had a great time and worked up a good sweat. If the high impact is hard on your knees, modify the movements and jump around less. Ashley adds, "Regulars become more confident with the moves and their bodies." Flexibility increases through range of motion; legs and core more toned. Add Zumba twice a week to other cardiovascular and strength training exercises. A great way to get off the treadmill and smile a lot.

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### Belly dancing

Although belly dancing has been on the fitness circuit for over a decade, I haven't done a class. At Chemagne Martin's Toronto studio ([chemagnedance.com](http://chemagnedance.com)), exotic Middle Eastern music set the stage. Chemagne elegantly led the class, inviting a soft, feminine tone. Initially I felt odd gyrating in front of the varied participants; that waned as I was encouraged to release my inhibitions and started to feel sexy, quite new for this normally rigid triathlete. Benefits: increased core strength, fluidity of movement, cardiovascular fitness, weight loss and increased sensuality.

**Bottom line:** Moves are complex, although Chemagne makes them look easy. It's not about comparing but going within to channel the inner goddess, being sensual – not having perfect athletic form. My whole body felt worked and lengthened, mostly my core. The arm wave helped my Blackberry wrists. This dance style is a little shy on the cardio promise, however, it replaces a once-a-week yoga or pilates class to complement a cardio workout. Look for smaller class sizes for more individual instruction.

Chemagne (left) teaches Cherilee (right) intricate belly dancing moves.



**RIB CAGE SLIDE:** works abdominals, particularly obliques and upper back muscles.



**HIP THRUST:** works abductors (outer thighs), obliques and glutes.

## LIFESTYLE



**PELVIC LOCK:** works pelvic floor muscles, and lower abdominals.



**HAND WAVE:** works arms - triceps, shoulders, forearms, and wrists (great for carpal tunnel).



**BODY WAVE:** works spine, including core.

Spice up your fitness program with a fun, new dance class. Visit Cherilee at [envisionwellness.ca](http://envisionwellness.ca) **H&L**



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