

BODY & SOUL

DANCE FITNESS FEVER

Tired of the same old workout?
It's time to bust a move

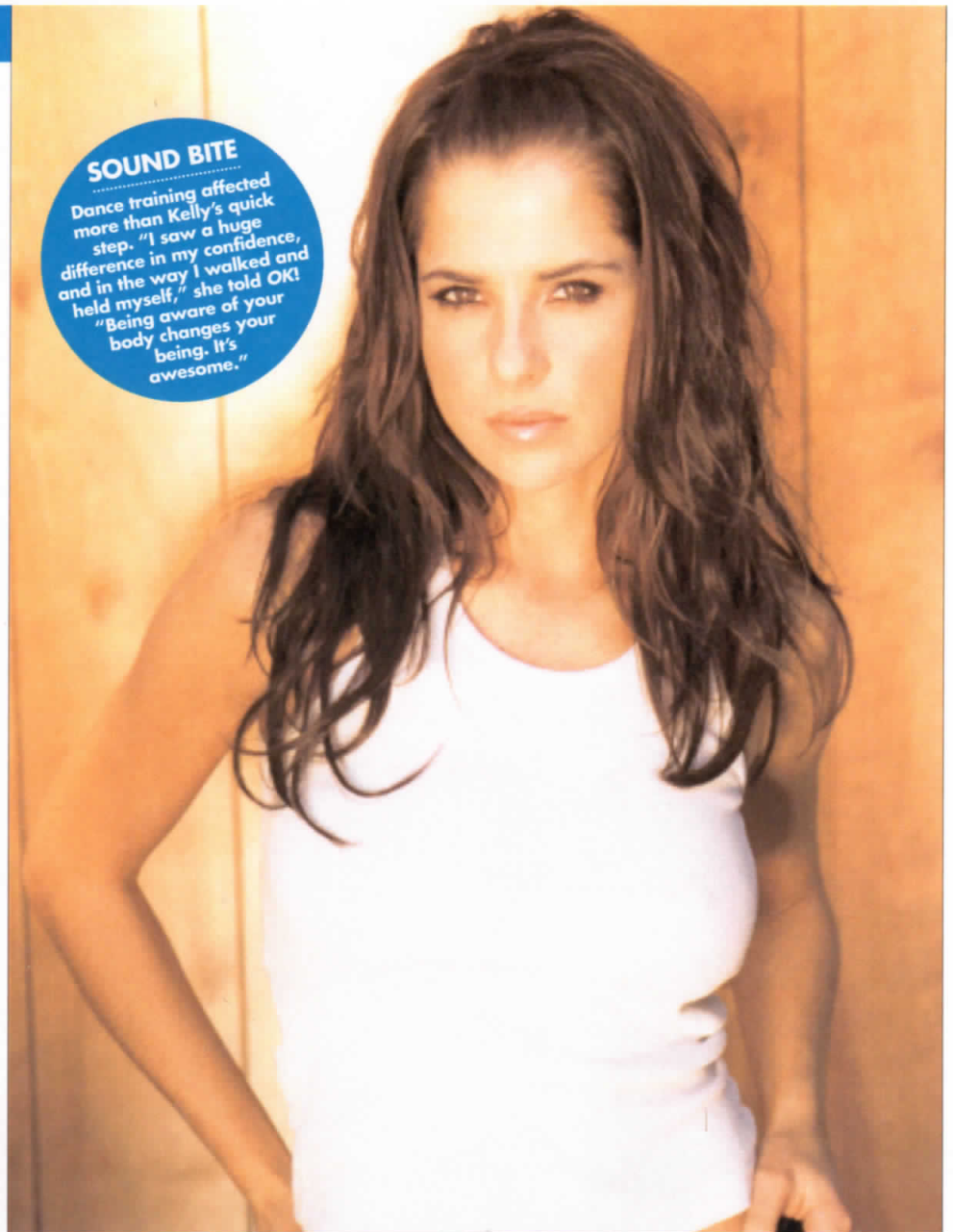
When was the last time you danced in front of the mirror? Admit it: It wasn't that long ago, right? It's OK. We haven't outgrown it either. And if the success of reality shows *Dancing With the Stars* (on ABC) and *So You Think You Can Dance?* (on Fox) is any indication, it seems America has caught some serious dance fever, too. Even for those who don't think they can dance (or don't know they can't), everyone can have fun doing it. The added bonus is that dancing also happens to be a fantastic workout. Read on and find out why dance fitness is so popular, and how you can get into the groove.

THINK YOU CAN'T DANCE?

"People tend to think that they can't dance, but everyone loves to dance," says Petra Kolber, a former dancer who teaches at Equinox in Los Angeles. No matter how skilled you are, "moving to music just feels good," says Carrie Ann Inaba, a professional dancer and choreographer who has been a judge on *Dancing With the Stars*



John O'Hurley lost more than 20 pounds while practicing during DWTS.



SOUND BITE

Dance training affected more than Kelly's quick step. "I saw a huge difference in my confidence, and in the way I walked and held myself," she told OK! "Being aware of your body changes your being. It's awesome."

Kelly Monaco, whom *Dancing With the Stars* judge Carrie Ann Inaba calls the "most improved on the show," went from being the underdog to winning the competition.

Stars and a choreographer on *So You Think You Can Dance?* And if something feels good, you'll be more inclined to do it. The interest in dance has become so great that nearly 50 percent of health clubs now offer some form of dance class, according to the IDEA Health & Fitness Association. "I'm seeing a lot of different types of dance in the fitness studios, ranging from MTV-style to jazz to belly dancing," says Kolber, who is also a spokesperson for IDEA. "There are even classes influenced by Bollywood."

Beth Handline, owner of Dance Trance Fitness, which has studios nationwide, thinks that people are turning to dance not only because it's fun but also because they're tired of their usual workout. "We get people who are bored of doing traditional aerobics from 1980 and are looking for something new that keeps them interested and motivated. And

that's what dance does," she says. "It also brings a spiritual and mental component to working out. People connect with the music and let themselves go for an hour. It's a huge stress reliever. I even see people develop a lot of confidence and personality through dance." If you're worried about mastering the moves, don't be. "We break down the steps and make them accessible," says Kolber. "People end up doing things they never thought they could do. There is immediate gratification."

THE BODY BENEFITS

All you have to do is look at a dancer's toned, lean body to know that dancing can whip you into shape. Practically every style can give you an excellent cardiovascular workout and is likely to work muscles that you wouldn't

use otherwise. Dance can also enhance your flexibility, strength, balance and posture, all of which are important for overall fitness, says Inaba. And if weight loss is your goal, dancing can certainly help you get there. "Just look at John O'Hurley. He lost between 20 and 30 pounds during the show [*Dancing With the Stars*]," says Inaba. He's managed to maintain it too: "Every ounce is still off," John told *OK!* "I think my metabolism froze in this position. And the flexibility — I'm able to touch parts of my body I haven't seen since I was 25."

START GETTING DOWN

Not sure what type of dance you like best? "Figure out what kind of music you like, and take it from there," says Inaba. "For instance, I love dancing to house music. I can play it and dance for hours and hours in my home." Or go watch a class at the gym or at a studio and see if you get a good feeling from the teacher. "Not every kind of dancing works for everyone," she says. But there should be at least one type of dance that can work for you, whether you are young or old, in shape or out of shape, alone or in a couple. All you have to do is take the first step.

To find a class in your area, check out these resources: New York Sports Clubs, nysc.com; Equinox Fitness Clubs, equinoxfitness.com; The Sports Club/LA, thesportsclubla.com; Crunch, crunch.com; dancenetfitness.com.

OK!



Contestants Nick and Kamilah channel the disco era on *So You Think You Can Dance*?

FEATURE BY RACHEL RABKIN



Choreographer and former Fly Girl Carrie Ann Inaba has lent her expertise to *DWTS* and *So You Think You Can Dance*?

RUMOR OR REAL DEAL?

RUMOR: YOU WILL GAIN WEIGHT IF YOU EAT RIGHT BEFORE BED.

REAL DEAL: That's a big rumor. In fact, studies show that it doesn't matter whether you eat most of your food at night or in the morning, says nutritionist Tammy Lakatos Shames, co-author of *Fire Up Your Metabolism*. What matters is how much you eat overall. That said, usually when people eat late at night, they tend to let down their defenses and make unhealthy choices, which is where you may get into trouble. "Late at night, people aren't eating salads, they're eating junk food," says Shames. If you need to eat late occasionally, however, don't skip dinner entirely. Instead, eat a small, light meal. "Skipping dinner will leave you ravenous and set you up to overeat the next day," says Shames.

ASK RACHEL

Our health director answers your top questions



DEAR RACHEL My doctor prescribed me the sleep medication Ambien. But I heard that Eminem got addicted to it. Is it safe?

• Yes, it's safe if you use it as your doctor recommended, and you check in with him regularly, says Dr. David Neubauer, associate director of the Johns Hopkins Sleep Disorders Center. It is true that the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) considers sleep medications such as Ambien, Lunesta and Sonata (which are in a class of sleep drugs called benzodiazepine receptor agonists) to have the potential for abuse. "But I don't think that people are going to suddenly develop an addiction to these drugs if they don't have a history of drug abuse," says Dr. Neubauer. If addiction is a concern for you, you might want to talk with your doctor about the new sleep medication Rozerem. It is not in the same class of drugs as Ambien and is not considered by the DEA to have any potential for abuse. That's because it doesn't work by way of sedation as the other medications do. Instead, Rozerem works through melatonin receptors in the brain. Note: Before you try any sleep aids, talk with your doctor about working to change your lifestyle and sleep habits first.

DEAR RACHEL

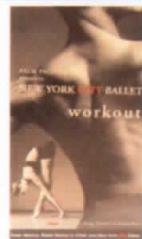
Are sanitizing hand gels really as good as washing your hands?

• That seems to be the case. A recent study in the journal *Pediatrics* found that using alcohol-based hand sanitizers throughout the day — especially after going to the bathroom and before cooking and eating — can reduce the spread of gastrointestinal illnesses like stomach flu by more than 50 percent, and reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses like colds by 20 percent. While the hand sanitizers don't remove visible dirt as washing with soap and water does, "the alcohol-based gels reduce bacteria on hands even more than just washing," says researcher Dr. Thomas J. Sandora. So it looks like carrying a hand sanitizer in your bag and using it when you're not near a sink is a great way zap germs on the spot.

IF YOU HAVE A HEALTH OR FITNESS QUESTION, E-MAIL askrachel@ok-magazine.com OR WRITE TO: ASK RACHEL, *OK!* MAGAZINE, 475 5TH AVE., NEW YORK, NY 10017

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HEALTH BITE

A COLD CURE NO MORE America's favorite holistic cold remedy, echinacea, does not seem to be the wonder supplement it's been touted to be. A new rigorous study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* found that echinacea does not prevent or alleviate cold symptoms. While some experts think more research is needed, your best bet for nursing a cold may simply be good old-fashioned rest, lots of liquids and Grandma's chicken soup.