

Healthy Living for Dancers (Chapter 7)

How 30 Minutes per Week Can Make You Look and Feel Younger on the Dance Floor

By Veronica Collings, D.C.

Last January, we began our quest for health by balancing blood sugar with the Sugar Control Program and many successfully lost weight and gained the many benefits of a balanced metabolism. You can read about some of these successes on my web site, www.drveronicacollings.com, under the heading of "Patient Stories of Weight Management." However, if you started pear- or apple-shaped, weight loss alone will only result in a smaller pear or apple. To regain a youthful shape, endurance and strength, you have to possess the primary attribute of a young body: muscle.

I know what you are thinking. I don't have the time or inclination to spend hours huffing and puffing to "get fit" and build muscle. I'm here as proof that 15-30 minutes per week can produce both results, not only more efficiently, but with much less risk of injury than any traditional exercise.

In November of 2009, after being exposed to the information I'm about to share with you, I switched from my traditional routine of 3-5 days per week of exercise that I had been doing for nearly 20 years. For all those years, I did exercise that did take several hours per week, combining aerobics and weights. I switched to a revolutionary method of exercise, High Intensity Training, which only required 15 minutes per week and produced even better results than all the hours that I had previously expended on the effort. Now, a year later, I feel stronger and better defined than when I was spending all that time doing conventional "exercise."

What is High Intensity Training? It is weight training that emphasizes a high level of effort in brief and infrequent workouts: high effort to reach the most powerful muscle fibers hardly ever used, the fast twitch fibers, and infrequent workouts to allow enough time for their recovery, which is the phase where the muscle is built. The muscle that then builds as the result of this effort, then requires one's body to increase oxygen and blood supply to maintain it. Consequently, contrary to popular belief that "aerobic" exercise creates these



improved oxygenating and cardiovascular benefits, it's actually the muscle mass that causes these improvements. The exacting scientific evidence for these extraordinary claims can be found in Dr. Doug McGuff's and John Little's book, *Body by Science*. This book, although a bit of an exacting read in itself, does a very comprehensive job of explaining the system and instructing anyone on how to apply it.

For those of you who believe, "that's all well and good for kids, but I'm too old for this," I'd like to refer you to *Body by Science*, chapter 11, "The Ideal Training Program for Seniors." In that chapter, you'll learn of a 72 year-old program participant who, after six months of training, had the measurable strength equal to an incoming 25 year old. This is not an atypical result and 72 is, by far, not the upper limit. Great results were had at every age, including nursing home residents well into their 80's and 90's.

In dancing, as in life, your body is your vehicle of expression. You wouldn't think, for instance, of letting your car's maintenance lapse and still expect it to get you where you need to go reliably and in comfort, would you? Well, the same applies to your body. The key is to keep it well maintained and in perfect running

condition if you want it to perform beautifully and effortlessly.

The benefits of this program that I have so far listed here are just the tip of the iceberg. The health and longevity benefits of this type of exercise can and do fill several books. The one that I recommend the most to my patients which still explains the basic principles and science without being too cumbersome to read is *The Slow Burn Fitness Revolution*, by Drs. Eades and Fredrick Hahn.

Both *Body by Science* and *Slow Burn* are describing the same concepts with slightly different emphases, and I like each for different reasons. *Body by Science's* workout format is more effective at applying the concepts, but *Slow Burn* explains them more easily. Both books will give you everything that you need to get started on the road to looking and feeling younger. By the way, if you missed the opportunity, last year, to participate in the January Sugar Control Program Marathon, I'm doing it again, this year, and all are welcome. Refer to the January/February 2010 issue of this newsletter for more info on sugar balancing. Ideally, you want to use both healthy eating and exercise at the same time for best results. I hope to see you on the dance floor in 2011.

Editors Note: At Dr. Collings recommendation, I read Slow Burn Fitness Revolution, cut wheat out of my diet, and started the slow burn exercise program with the assistance of my trainer. After one month, I had a blood test and, for the first time in years, my cholesterol and triglyceride readings were in normal range. I could feel a difference in my muscle tone just days after starting this regime, even though I had been exercising with a trainer one to three times a week for over 18 months. I only represent a sample size of one, but it sold me on this program, which I plan to continue.

I highly recommend this book, but suggest starting with the help of a trainer to ensure that you are using correct form so as not to injure yourself.