

Do Real Men Take Ballet?

BY LISA JAFFE HUBBELL • POSTED SEPTEMBER 30 2010 AT 12:00 PM

Pittsburgh Steeler Lynn Swann. Willie Gault of the Chicago Bears. Former Dallas Cowboy [Herschel Walker](#). [The South African national soccer team](#). Mikhail Baryshnikov. What do they have in common? Ballet. Yes, some of the most famous, burly, bruising football and soccer players recognize that what Baryshnikov did on stage wasn't wimpy, but took incredible strength, flexibility and stamina. Ballet isn't girly at all.



In college, my brother begrudgingly took a ballet class after his roommate, a UC Davis discus thrower, insisted that it would improve his balance and coordination. "As a side benefit, there were 50 girls, three guys, and only one of them – me – was straight, my brother said. Still, he got more than a date from the class. "I know I gained flexibility and balance and worked different muscles than just running and lifting weights."

There are other fitness regimens that some guys might consider too feminine and unlikely to move them towards their fitness goals. Mention Pilates and they probably think they'll end up with a body like Jennifer Aniston or Gwyneth Paltrow. Just about any Pilates instructor would dispute that. Like ballet, Pilates can help with flexibility. But its real emphasis is on core strength, says Faith Stankevich, a certified Pilates instructor in the Seattle area. "By bumping the weight down and doing more reps, you create a foundation to move better," she says. "It will help your swimming, your running, your cycling. You will have more body awareness and learn to shift focus away from joints. You can work harder for

longer – in an event, and in life."

Like Pilates, yoga can help with body awareness and core strength and it won't make you look like Madonna – unless that's your goal. "It also takes you out of the competitive zone," says Cat Earisman, MT, RYT, a yoga teacher in Vermont. "You don't have to achieve anything, just breathe and pay attention to your body. That's healthy for anyone who is in a really competitive sport." It also teaches you to use your body in a different way, she says, and challenges your brain. "It improves that mind-body connection. It isn't about how far or how fast or if your heart rate is in the target zone."

Men should be open to anything that helps them improve fitness, and that may be a class that's full of women with lean bodies. You could end up with improved fitness, and perhaps a phone number or two. Whatever the goal, tell it to your proposed teacher, says Stankevich. If you don't like what you hear, find another instructor.

CONNECT THE DOTS

If you're out of shape, check with a doctor before starting an exercise program. To find a good yoga teacher, look through one of the well-known training organizations like [Yoga Alliance](#). Ask teachers about their training, certification, and years teaching. With Pilates, look for someone who has gone through a certified training course. Two such courses include [STOTT](#) certification which requires hundreds of hours of classes and observed teaching before certification, and [BASI](#), which concentrates on what they call authentic or classical Pilates. Ballet teachers trained in the Cecchetti method are listed with the [Cecchetti Council of America](#). If you live near a professional ballet company, they often have associated schools and offer classes.

LINK | SHARE THIS POST | 1 COMMENT

balance ballet flexibility men's fitness pilates yoga

1 COMMENT

Sharon London Great article. I have a personal pilates trainer and have noticed in the last two years that there

ABOUT OUR BLOG

Our blog is a collection of thoughts and stories that serve as inspiration for what healthymagination is— a shared commitment to creating better health for more people. It's written by the people behind healthymagination, as well as members of our advisory board and guest contributors from around the web.

POPULAR TOPICS

Children Fitness health Healthcare Health Tips Healthymagination Lifestyle Nutrition Research Technology

MOST POPULAR POSTS

- 3 Healthy Family Habits To Prevent Childhood Obesity
- Mental Fitness 101
- High Tech Helmets Protect Young Athletes From Concussions
- Is Lindsay Lohan Addicted to Adderall?
- World Suicide Prevention Day

OUR AUTHORS

- Lisa Collier Cool
- Britta Barrett
- Conor McKechnie
- Melba Newsome
- Lisa Jaffe Hubbell
- Paula Dranov
- Randy Hecht
- Karen Berger

BLOGROLL

- New York Times Well
- John Barban
- The Healthcare IT Guy
- The Health Care Blog
- KevinMD

are more men in the studio. Last night, for example, while I was having my session, two of the other trainers had male clients. My trainer told me it is great for them as while men have good upper body strength, they often lack in flexibility and core strength.

Posted September 30 2010 AT 12:56 pm

- [Cooking Light Eating Smart](#)
- [Think Simple Now](#)
- [Good Magazine](#)
- [Diets In Review](#)
- [The Next Level](#)

ADD YOUR COMMENT

NAME (required)

EMAIL (required)

Your comment needs to be approved by the site owner before it will appear. Thanks for your patience. If you have any questions, please read GE's [Blogging Policy](#).

I accept

[→ SUBMIT COMMENT](#)

CONTACT US

Share your ideas at:
contact.healthymagination@ge.com.

[← PREVIOUS POST](#)

[NEXT POST →](#)

PROJECTS

[Annual Report](#)
[Better Health Conversation](#)
[Morsel](#)
[Health of Nations](#)
[Healthy How-To's](#)
[Visualizing Data](#)
[Healthy Innovation](#)
[Better Health Study](#)
[Sharing Healthy Ideas](#)

ABOUT HEALTHYMAGINATION

[What is Healthymagination?](#)
[Leadership](#)
[Advisory Board](#)
[Press](#)
[GE Healthcare](#)
[GE Reports](#)

CONNECT WITH US

[Blog](#)
[Facebook](#)
[Twitter](#)
[YouTube](#)



[imagination at work](#) | [Contact Information](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Terms](#) | © 2010 General Electric Company