

# Zumba!



If going to the gym is a struggle and you dread the routine, Zumba may be the answer. With the fitness trend encouraging us to ‘drop the workout and join the party,’ it sounds like a fun alternative for people who hate to exercise.

Zumba fitness is a Latin-inspired mix of music and dance steps that creates an invigorating class. According to a study by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Zumba gets similar results to other moderately intense exercise like cardio kickboxing. During an average 40-minute class, you’ll burn about 370 calories and achieve workouts at 80 percent of your maximum heart rate.

“Zumba can be modified for your personal fitness level and abilities. It can be as basic or as intense as you want,” says Fred Shelby, Director of Healthy Living at YMCA of Greater Montgomery.

“It’s not a competition. Your instructor will help you achieve your personal best.”

The exercise program was born in the late 1990s in Colombia when a fitness instructor forgot his usual workout music and decided to fill in with his Latin albums. He switched up the class and encouraged participants to follow his dance moves. Now, 15 million people in 180 countries practice Zumba.

“Don’t worry if you’re not a dancer. You’ll be fine,” Shelby says. “You’ll start with basic moves and pick up more advanced steps as you catch on.”

During your first class, the instructor will explain the rhythmic moves and help you make adjustments, if needed. And, it’s okay if you need to take a break to catch your breath. It’s easy to get back in the workout, Shelby adds.

Be sure to wear comfortable

clothes and shoes so you can move freely.

“Each instructor has a different style. All of our Zumba classes will have the same basic key points but you’re going to get a different experience with each of the instructors. If your first class isn’t quite what you’re looking for, try another one.”

The workout-in-disguise offers an array of physical and mental benefits, from strengthening your core and cardiovascular system to improving balance and coordination. In a study published by the European Journal of Sport Science, female participants had an improved quality of life score and their self-esteem improved 16 percent after eight weeks of Zumba.

To learn more about Zumba and other fitness classes offered by the YMCA of Greater Montgomery, visit [www.ymcamontgomery.org](http://www.ymcamontgomery.org).