

ASK DR. MOLLEN

12/82

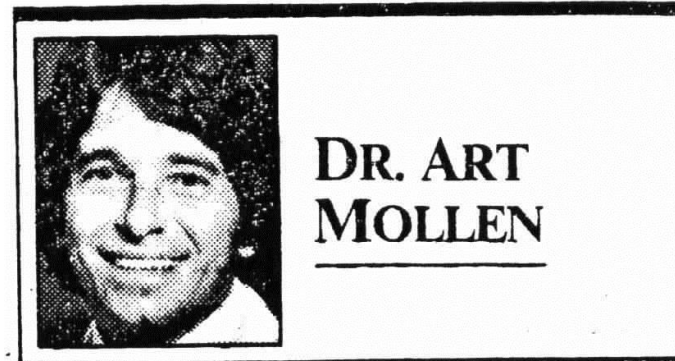
Aerobic dancing certainly has been the craze of the '80s as a way to get in shape. An older form of dancing that's also good for you is square-dancing.

An average evening of square-dancing lasts about three hours. The average singing call lasts about 3 1/2 minutes. Usually the tempo is about 130 beats per minute, with each beat being a step, so during each singing call a dancer takes about 450 steps.

Another call is referred to as the "patter," which lasts about six minutes, and the dancers take about 800 steps. The combination of the singing call and the patter call takes about nine minutes or 1,200 steps. The finale of this is called a "tip." There usually are nine tips per evening, so a dancer could dance almost 11,000 steps in an evening of square-dancing.

With all those steps, a square-dancer can travel more than 2 miles in an evening and burn more than 200 calories. Some people participate in an even more vigorous type of square-dancing and can burn up to 1,000 calories.

Square-dancing also can provide cardiovascular conditioning effects if the pulse rate is elevated for three minutes or more.



The key to any exercise is regularity, and it has to be done at least three to five times weekly for you to maintain a good level of fitness. If you can't go square-dancing that often, you could substitute an evening of square-dancing for your morning jog or other exercise.

If you square-dance on a regular basis, stretching exercises can help reduce possible aches and pains and prevent injuries. The calves, ankles, Achilles' tendons and feet are the most common areas square-dancers complain about, so stretching exercises for the legs, ankles and feet are important.

In addition to all the physical benefits, square-dancing provides important family and social benefits.

The Register and Tribune Syndicate Inc.