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Pole dancing helps strip off pounds

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Pole dancing tricks function as weight training, studio owner says
- Participant says she's more confident about her body because of pole dancing
- The classes are women-only, and many participants wear stilettos

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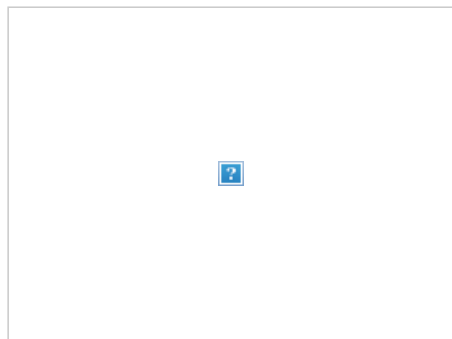
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By Judy Fortin
CNN Medical Correspondent

TEXT SIZE

ATLANTA, Georgia (CNN) -- The lights were turned down low and the music was pulsing as Kimberly Wright made her way toward a 16-foot tall dance pole to do some tricks.



Pole dancing carries cardiovascular benefits, says Angela Edwards, owner of studio PoleLaTeaz.

Wright is not an exotic dancer in a strip club. She's a 38-year-old mother of two from Atlanta, Georgia, looking to get in a decent workout.

"It works the abs, oh my goodness, muscles I didn't even know I had," Wright chuckled.

On this night, Wright is among more than a dozen women of all shapes and sizes -- no men allowed - attending a beginner class at PoleLaTeaz, an Atlanta dance studio owned by Angela Edwards.

"We get preachers' wives, teachers, nurses, accountants, lawyers, anyone between the age of 18 and 70," Edwards said. "It's not boring...you get to wear fun clothes, listen to good music...and release your inner sexpot."

If online listings across the country are an indication, the popularity of pole dancing is

spreading across the country from Southern California to Chicago to the Bible Belt.

A former labor and delivery nurse, Edwards opened her own studio two years ago and now has 400 students. She plans to add another location in the fall.

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Edwards demonstrated a few moves during an advanced class later in the evening.

She climbed to the top a pole and, clenching her inner thighs, hung upside down. Watch Edwards demonstrate pole dancing >

"The dancing part is where you get the cardiovascular benefits," she said. Then there's "pole-tricking," or doing specific movements balancing your body weight against the pole, such as the "fireman spin."

"That's where you get the weight lifting and weight training," Edwards said.

She mentioned that there is a risk of injury so regardless of their experience, all students start the class with a half-hour warmup using Pilates-like stretches.

Thick mats are placed near the poles as students practice new "tricks," and Edwards encouraged dancers to modify their moves depending on their abilities.

"You see good results," Edwards said. "We have women who come in here 40 to 50 pounds overweight and they drop it in about six to eight months and they get great, nice, hourglass curves."

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Cicely Rogers is one of those women who have seen results.

"I started last August and I've gone down two dress sizes. I've lost 20 pounds and I feel awesome," she said.

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The critical care nurse at an Atlanta hospital admitted that she hurt all over after the first few sessions of pole dancing.

There's another benefit, Rogers said. "This made me feel better about my body. I used to be nervous about my body and try to hide it. Now I'm a lot more open and confident. I stand up straight and feel good about myself."

Rogers is one of the few women wearing shorts and a tank top. Many other students are scantily dressed in lingerie-like outfits.

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Almost everyone strapped on stilettos when the dancing got under way. Some of the women said it added to the atmosphere of the class.

"It makes you feel sensual. It makes you feel sexy," said Antigone Locklear, 42, of Atlanta.

Wright said feeling sexy is part of the reason she attended class. Now she's waiting for her husband to install her own dance pole at home.

She smiled. "You know what? I am sexy and yes, pole dancing does put you in the mood." [E-mail to a friend](#) | [Mixx it](#) | [Share](#)

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