

GIVE ME A HIGH FIVE: five aspects of fitness that is!

By Ann Gilbert

CPT ACE, SCW, AEA

For many of us, being fit means maintaining a healthy weight with diet and exercise. However, the "healthy weight = fit" idea really omits several of the components of what being truly fit means. In biological terms, "being fit" means being able to provide for one's own life and well-being by adhering to five aspects of physical fitness.

We all have an idea of what fit looks like. For many, it means having a thinner body, massive muscles or an hour glass figure. However, being physical fit is not defined by an appearance. The five aspects or components of being fit are listed below.

1. Muscular Strength
2. Muscular Endurance
3. Flexibility
4. Cardiovascular Endurance
5. Healthy Body Composition

Muscular strength is defined as the power you have to lift, push and carry heavy objects. It is also seen as your ability to exert a force during a daily activity. Resistance training is the mode of exercise which allows you to see an improvement in overall strength and quality of life.

Muscular endurance is defined as the ability of the muscle to perform contraction or movement over a period of time. So in essence it is how long can I go, rather than how much can I lift, without becoming fatigued.

Flexibility or being flexible, can be defined as the range of motion you have around a specific joint. Being flexible reduces injury potential and allows for pain-free movement during activity. A basic stretching program may be all you need to improve this often neglected aspect of being truly fit.

Cardiovascular endurance is the ability of the body's circulatory and respiratory system to deliver fuel to cells during any activity over a specific time period. Thus, those who have cardiovascular fitness can deliver blood and oxygen to the body for an extended period of time.

Having a good body composition, and addressing the ratio of fat to lean, is the fifth aspect of being fit. Body composition refers to the relative amount of muscle, fat, bone and other vital parts of the body. Experts agree that assessing one's composition provides a better evaluation of overall health than weight or BMI alone. It is important to maintain a level of fat that is not too low (below 3-6% for men and 9-12% for women), nor too high (above 25% for men or 38% percent for women). There is a variety of tools used to measure body composition. They include calipers and bio-electrical devices that can assist in monitoring changes as one adheres to all aspects of fitness.

Attaining success in all five aspects allows you to experience the following benefits:

- Increased caloric burn and overall weight management
- Decrease in blood pressure
- Improved blood lipids
- Decrease in pain during daily activity
- Decrease in bone loss
- Increase in overall stamina
- Increase in self-esteem and overall appearance
- Decrease in fracture during falls
- Reduce the risk factors for disease

The American College of Sports Medicine, ACSM, recommends that we all follow what is called the FITT principles when designing an exercise program that includes all five aspects of fitness. The acronym stands for:

F= Frequency or how often one is to perform the exercise

I= Intensity of the exercise to be performed

T= Time spent or the duration of the exercise to be performed

T= The type or mode of exercise that will be chosen

Seeing an increase in overall physical fitness, weight management and health status means that there has been adherence to a program that addresses all five aspects of fitness. Being lead by a professional coach, who will assist in goal setting, program design and overall adherence is the number one way to make sense out of the often confusing prescription for overall health and fitness. Scheduling a variety of group fitness classes or small group programs weekly will also aid in attaining the big five. Finally, frequent assessments to see improvement in all five aspects of fitness will be the number one way to stay at it over the years.

COACH'S MOMENT

Write a program with specificity

Progress once there is adaptation to avoid reversibility

Follow the FITT prescription for all five aspects of fitness

If you follow the aforementioned principles noted in this article, you will be certain to improve your overall health and fitness.

NEW! Take the quiz online

CLICK HERE »

ANSWERS: T F F F F T T T F