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Physical factors of fitness contribute to physical health and help guide the process of getting better. You already know that benefits come when you prioritize physical activity. The trick is understanding what health-related fitness is and how to achieve it. The five components of fitness are the blueprint for the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) physical activity guidelines and serve as a helpful tool for organizing and executing a well-balanced workout routine. Creating a fitness plan that incorporates these elements can ensure you get maximum health benefits. Cardiovascular enduranceMuscular strengthMuscular enduranceFlexibilityBody compositionThe Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) links regular physical activity to a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, improved bone health, enhanced mental health, and improved quality of life with age. Learn more about health-related fitness. Martin Novak / Getty Images Cardiovascular endurance (cardiorespiratory endurance or aerobic fitness) refers to your body's ability to efficiently and effectively intake oxygen and deliver it to your body's tissues through the heart, lungs, arteries, vessels, and veins. By engaging in health-related fitness exercises that challenge your heart and lungs, you can: Maintain or improve the efficient delivery and uptake of oxygen to your body's systemsEnhance cellular metabolismEase the physical challenges of everyday lifeBecause heart disease accounts for roughly 630,000 deaths in the United States each year, starting a health-related fitness program that enhances cardiovascular wellness is particularly important. Running, walking, cycling, swimming, dancing, circuit training, and other activities that get your heart rate up are good ways to build cardiovascular endurance. A good rule of thumb is to aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week. PeopleImages / Getty Images Muscular endurance is one of two factors that contribute to overall muscular health (muscular strength is the other). Think of muscular endurance as a particular muscle group's ability to continuously contract against a given resistance. Long-distance cycling offers a clear example. To pedal a bike over a long distance, often up steep inclines, cyclists must develop fatigue-resistant muscles in their legs and glutes. These are evidence of a high level of muscular endurance. Likewise, holding a plank to develop core strength is another example of muscular endurance using isometric exercise. The longer you can contract your abdominals and keep your body in a steady position the greater endurance you have through your hips, abs, and shoulders. The extent to which you focus on muscular endurance should be directly related to your health or fitness goals. It's important to realize that muscular endurance is muscle group-specific. This means you can develop high endurance levels in some muscle groups (like cyclists building endurance in their legs) without necessarily acquiring the same levels in other muscle groups, depending on your needs. For general health, talk to a healthcare provider to determine what is best for you given your medical history and current fitness level. Everyone's needs and goals are different, so do what is right for you. Some people may want to develop enough endurance to transport groceries from the car to your house. Low-intensity weight-bearing or strength-training workouts will help you build that endurance. Suppose you want to become an endurance athlete capable of competing in sports that require continual muscle contraction, such as obstacle course races, CrossFit, or cycling. In that case, you'll need a higher level of muscular endurance. You may want to focus more on training regimens that use high-repetition strength training and sport-specific activity to make you a better athlete. Caliaimage/Sam Edwards / Getty Images While muscular endurance refers to how fatigue-resistant a muscle is, muscular strength refers to the force generated by a muscle. Strength training involves contracting skeletal muscles against resistance, such as weights, resistance bands, or your own body weight. Strength training builds muscle mass, improves bone density, and increases metabolic rate. It also helps with posture, balance, and coordination. Strength training can also help with chronic conditions like osteoarthritis, type 2 diabetes, and depression. Pectoral muscles but comparatively weak hamstrings. Your health-related fitness goals, physical abilities, and limitations determine your training. Keep in mind that everyone is different and will, therefore, have different goals. For instance, some people may want to be strong enough to lift a heavy box or easily stand up from a chair. In this instance, enhanced muscular strength may be a byproduct of a workout routine focused on developing muscular endurance. If, however, you want to develop muscle mass or to be able to lift heavier weights at the gym, focus your training regimen on lifting heavy weights. To improve muscle strength: Use heavier weights with fewer reps, causing your muscles to fatigue with each set.To improve muscle endurance: Use lighter weights and higher reps to increase endurance over time. It's possible to improve muscular strength and endurance at the same time. You can do this in conjunction with cardiovascular training. For instance, circuit-training routines that combine strength exercises and cardio into a single training routine can make your health-related fitness program more efficient. ACSM's guidelines state that adults should perform strength-training exercises two to three days a week using a variety of movements and equipment to target all major muscle groups. Hero Images / Getty Images Flexibility refers to the range of motion around a joint without pain. Like muscular strength and endurance, flexibility is joint-specific. For instance, you may have very flexible shoulders but tight and inflexible hamstrings or hips. Flexibility is essential at any age. It plays a role in unhindered movement and can affect your balance, coordination, and agility. Maintaining a full range of motion through your major joints can reduce the likelihood of injury and enhance athletic performance. As you get older, the importance of flexibility becomes even more apparent. While completely stopping the aging process isn't possible, protecting your joints and maintaining mobility can help keep you spry well into your later years. The ACSM's physical activity guidelines recommend stretching for at least 10 minutes most days of the week. Yoga, tai chi, or Pilates Active stretching, such as lifting your leg and holding it using the contraction of the opposing muscle Passive stretching also called relaxed stretching, is where you assume a stretch position and hold it with the assistance of another part of your body, a partner, or an apparatus, like a strap. Isometric stretching, a type of static stretching, uses resistance to alternate between relaxing and contracting the muscle. We've researched and reviewed the best online tai chi classes. If you're looking for an online class, explore which option may be best for you. Body composition, or your body's fat mass ratio to fat-free mass, is the final component of health-related fitness. Because fat mass can be associated with adverse health outcomes, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, attaining and maintaining the right body composition for your unique situation is the goal of most exercise routines. A healthcare provider can advise you on what is right for you and your situation. To see improvements in body composition, you need to know your starting point. Weighing yourself on a scale is not recommended, as weight alone doesn't tell you the makeup of your internal tissues. Some methods of measuring body composition are more accessible than others. Bioelectrical impedance analysis (BIA): Some gyms offer this type of testing, or you can purchase a scale for home use that uses bioelectrical impedance analysis to estimate body fat percentage. Hydrostatic underwater weighing: Hydrostatic testing involves being weighed on dry land followed on an underwater scale. You can find these testing facilities in research labs and some fitness centers. DEXA (dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry) scans: These are typically used for measuring bone mineral density but can also accurately measure body composition. DEXA scans are usually performed at radiology centers and may or may not be covered by insurance. Body fat percentage calculator: These tools are not as accurate as a DEXA scan or hydrostatic testing but are readily available and easy to use. The results typically vary by approximately 3% to 5% from those of a DEXA scan. However, they can still provide useful information. Incorporating aspects that suit your goals and lifestyle is key to maintaining your passion for fitness. Frequently Asked Questions Some of the components of fitness are interrelated. For instance, when you train with weights, you can build muscular strength and endurance at the same time. When you lift weights with intensity, your heart rate can increase to the point you are working your cardiovascular system vigorously. Each component of fitness is important for functioning and aging well. Cardiovascular exercise, which is anything that increases your heart rate, will help stave off cardiovascular diseases along with several other benefits. Strength training improves daily functioning, reduces injury risks, increases metabolism, and helps maintain a healthy weight. Working on each component of fitness can increase your health by preventing many diseases and illnesses; preventing injuries and falls; improving outcomes as you age; reducing stress, anxiety, and depression; and boosting quality of life. A good fitness journal can help track your workouts and goals as you progress. Why do we talk about the 5 components of physical fitness? One word: Balance. Every person, every lifestyle, and every body is different—but a well-rounded approach to fitness is essential for all of us. Also, everyone's fitness needs to change over time. The way you trained at 13 won't cut it at 40, and what worked at 25 might not serve your body at 70. The key? Adjust, evolve, and keep moving. That's why we focus on the 5 components of fitness: Cardiovascular Endurance, Muscular Strength, Muscular Endurance, Flexibility, and Body Composition. Each plays a role in your health and performance. Being physically active is about feeling strong, moving better, and staying pain-free. But what does your body need most? More flexibility? Strength training? A boost in endurance? In this guide, we'll break down each health-related fitness component, its benefits, and how to integrate these into your routine. Let's get started. The 5 Components of Fitness Cardiovascular Endurance Cardiovascular endurance is how well your heart, lungs, and blood vessels deliver oxygen to your muscles during exercise. Basically, it's your body's ability to keep moving without running out of breath. The stronger your cardiovascular system, the longer you can go without fatigue. Training this component makes your body more efficient at delivering oxygen and clearing lactic acid—helping you recover faster and push further. We all know someone who struggles to go up a flight of stairs and ends up gasping for air. That's a sign they need to work on this fitness component. The best way? Cardio exercises like walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, and jump rope. The benefits of cardiovascular endurance include better heart and lung function, increased stamina, and a lower risk of heart disease and high blood pressure. It also burns calories, boosts energy, and reduces stress. Muscular Strength Muscular strength is your body's ability to generate force—in other words, how much power your muscles can produce in a single effort. It's what allows you to lift, push, or pull heavy objects without straining. Strong muscles support your posture, stabilize your joints, and protect you from injuries. The more strength you build, the easier it is to handle daily activities. This can be really basic stuff—carrying groceries, lifting your kid, or crushing your deadlift at the gym. Ever struggled to open a stubborn jar or felt your arm shaking after carrying something heavy? That's a sign your muscular strength could use some work. The best way to build strength is resistance training—exercises like squats, deadlifts, bench presses, pull-ups, and kettlebell swings. All movements performed against resistance. The benefits of muscular strength go beyond just lifting heavier. It improves joint stability, enhances bone density, and boosts metabolism by increasing muscle mass. Stronger muscles mean better performance, fewer injuries, and more power in everything you do. Muscular Endurance Building muscular strength is one thing, but how long can you sustain that strength? Muscular endurance is the ability to repeatedly exert force over time. Think of it as your muscles' stamina. Activities like long-distance running, hiking, or even yard work rely heavily on muscular endurance. Improving this component allows you to carry out daily tasks without getting tired too quickly. Cardiovascular Endurance Cardiovascular endurance is how well your heart, lungs, and blood vessels deliver oxygen to your muscles during exercise. Basically, it's your body's ability to keep moving without running out of breath. The stronger your cardiovascular system, the longer you can go without fatigue. Training this component makes your body more efficient at delivering oxygen and clearing lactic acid—helping you recover faster and push further. We all know someone who struggles to go up a flight of stairs and ends up gasping for air. That's a sign they need to work on this fitness component. The best way? Cardio exercises like walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, and jump rope. 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Body Composition

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components of fitness can work as a useful guide toward achieving physical fitness.Each of the components — cardio, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition — are associated with better physical fitness and overall health.Though your training plan depends on your fitness goals, it’s a good idea to incorporate a variety of training modalities into your workout routine. This may include some cardio exercises, muscular strength and endurance training, and stretching or dynamic movement.Since each area is important for health and overall fitness, keep them all in mind when designing your workout program.