

5 Health-Related Physical Fitness Components

Flexibility

Flexibility is the range of movement through which a joint or sequence of joints can move. Inactive individuals lose flexibility, whereas frequent movement helps retain the range of movement. Through stretching activities, the length of muscles, tendons, and ligaments is increased. The ligaments and tendons retain their elasticity through constant use. Flexibility is important to fitness; a lack of flexibility can create health problems for individuals. People who are flexible usually have good posture and may have less low-back pain. Many physical activities demand a range of motion to generate maximum force, such as serving a tennis ball or kicking a soccer ball.

Muscular Strength

Muscular strength is the ability of muscles to exert or resist force. Most activities do not build strength in areas where it is needed—the arm-shoulder girdle and the abdominal—trunk region. When you push, pull or lift objects, for example, your muscles are exerting a force. Muscular strength is the ability of a muscle to produce force at high intensities for short intervals. The greater muscular strength you have the easier and safer it is to accomplish most daily activities.

Muscular Endurance

Muscular endurance is the ability of a muscle, or a group of muscles to exert force over an extended period of time. Endurance postpones the onset of fatigue so that activity can be performed for lengthy periods. Sport activities require muscular endurance, because throwing, kicking, and striking skills have to be performed many times without fatigue. When you rake leaves, shovel snow, or do sit-ups, you are performing acts of muscular endurance. The better your muscular endurance, the longer you can continue activities without fatigue.

Cardiovascular Fitness

Aerobic fitness offers many health benefits and is often seen as the most important element of fitness. Cardiovascular endurance is the ability of the heart, the blood vessels, and the respiratory system to deliver oxygen efficiently over an extended period of time. To develop cardiovascular endurance, activity must be aerobic in nature. Activities that are continuous and rhythmic in nature require that a continuous supply of oxygen be delivered to the muscle cells. Activities that stimulate development in this area are paced walking, jogging, biking, rope jumping, aerobics, and swimming. The better your cardiovascular fitness, the easier it is to complete your daily tasks and still have energy to enjoy other activities.

Body Composition

Body composition is an integral part of health-related fitness. Body composition is the percent of fat, bone, and other tissues to lean body mass. After the thickness of selected skin folds has been measured, the percentage of lean body mass can be calculated by using formulas that have been developed using other, more accurate methods of measuring body composition.