



Physical Fitness – Fit for Life

What We Need to Know

Recently, leading medical experts issued a special report stating that the number of deaths in the United States due to lack of physical activity would soon surpass those attributed to tobacco use. Over the past decade, much has been learned about physical fitness and health. These new findings include:

1. **Fitness Increases Life Expectancy:** People who are generally inactive now can still improve their health status by becoming active on a regular basis.
2. **Even Moderate Exercise Leads to Better Health:** The level of physical activity does not need to be strenuous in order to make significant health benefits (e.g., regular walking, gardening or swimming can significantly lower the risk of a heart attack or stroke).
3. **Fitness Can Be Increased Gradually:** You can achieve greater health benefits by increasing your amount (or duration, frequency, intensity) of exercise. In other words, the greater a person's level of fitness, the greater he/she can reduce potential health risks.
4. **Small Amounts Add Up:** A person who exercises several times a day (e.g., walks 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at lunch, and 10 minutes after school) achieves a health benefit equal to walking for a full 30-minute period. This new finding is important since many people say it is hard to find 30 minutes or more exercise.

Conversation Starters

What are our excuses for not exercising? How can we change our schedules to make physical fitness more of a priority?

How do you feel after sitting at your computer or in front of the TV for an hour or two? How do you feel after exercising for an hour or two?

Resources

[National Institutes of Health on Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition](#)

[Association for Applied Sports Psychology](#)