The Fitness Corner

Facilitating Your Fitness Journey

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Inside this issue:

What Does it Mean to Be Fit? 1

Holmes Fitness Coaching 2

What Does it Mean to be Fit?

In the last issue of The Fitness Corner, I described the four benefits of a fitness lifestyle. These benefits include enhanced health and decreased risk for disease, decreased risk of injury, improved work performance and increased self-confidence. It is clear that we derive significant benefits from improving our level of fitness, but the question remains, "what does it mean to be fit?" The answer is fairly simple. To be fit, one must possess physical capability in four specific areas: *aerobic capacity*, *muscular strength and endurance*, *flexibility* and *body composition*.

1. **Aerobic Capacity**. Aerobic capacity, which is also known as cardiorespiratory fitness, refers to the health and function of the heart, lungs and circulatory system. Simply stated, aerobic fitness is the ability of the cardiorespiratory system (heart, lungs and blood vessels) to deliver an adequate supply of oxygen to exercising muscles. As your aerobic capacity increases your ability to participate in more intense and longer lasting exercise also increases (e.g., walking, running, swimming and bicycling). It can be argued that aerobic capacity is the most important of the four components of fitness because of the health benefits it bestows. According to the American College of Sports Medicine (2000), increased aerobic capacity leads to reduced blood pressure, decreased total cholesterol, increased HDL (good) cholesterol, decreased body fat, increased heart function and decreased risk of type 2 diabetes.

2. **Muscular Strength and Endurance**. Muscular strength is the maximum amount of force a muscle or muscle group can generate during a single contraction. Muscular endurance is the number of repeated contractions a muscle or muscle group can perform without tiring. Both are important components of overall fitness because increasing your strength through various types of resistance training (e.g., weightlifting) leads to increased bone strength, decreased bone loss, decreased muscle loss, increased tendon and ligament strength, increased physical capacity, improved metabolic function (e.g., burn more calories at rest), and de-

What Does it Mean to be Fit?

creased risk of injury.

3. **Flexibility**. Flexibility is the range of motion within a joint. Increased flexibility provides a variety of benefits such as decreased risk of injury, increased flow of blood and nutrients to joint structures, increased neuromuscular coordination, decreased risk of low back pain, improved posture and reduced muscular tension.

4. **Body Composition**. Body composition refers to the relative percentage of body weight that consists of **body fat** and **fat-free mass** (everything other than fat such as muscles, organs, blood, bones, water etc.). Generally speaking, the lower your body fat percentage the better. Volumes have been written on the diseases linked to excess body fat including heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, gall bladder disease and sleep disorders. Recently, an interesting question has been raised, "can you be fat and fit?" The answer is an overwhelming NO. A significant element of fitness is the possession of a healthy body fat percentage because increased fat leads to decreased athletic performance and increased risk of disease. According to the American Council on Exercise, an acceptable body-fat percentage for men is 18-24% (for truly fit men the percentage is 14-17%). An acceptable percentage for women is 25-31%, however truly fit women will be in the range of 21-24%. Body-fat percentages above 25% for men and 32% for women are considered obese.

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HFC Holmes Fitness Coaching

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At Holmes Fitness Coaching, my primary focus is on your health, physical fitness and quality of life. Using my 4-phase *Fitness Coaching Process*, I will help you improve your health and fitness, lose weight, reduce stress, and learn how to create a better balance between your personal and professional life. I also work with organizations that want to improve employee health and fitness in ways that positively impact job performance. I offer a variety of services designed to help you enhance overall health including **Fitness Coaching**, **Health & Fitness Seminars**, the **Fitness Corner Newsletter** and **TIPS Booklets**. Seminar topics include:

1. Health, Fitness and Job Performance.
2. How to Beat Stress and Balance Your Life.
3. How to Start a Successful Exercise Program.
4. Children and Exercise: How to Create a Lifelong Connection.
5. Lose Weight and Keep it Off...Permanently.

For more information on my health and fitness services, visit **www.holmesfitness.com**.