

# What does it mean to be physically fit?

There are many different levels of fitness, depending on your goals.



A goal may be to compete in some type of race, or it may be to get on the floor and play with your grandchildren. It is important for everyone to incorporate fitness into their daily lives.

Exactly what does exercise do for you? Exercise is good for your heart and reduces your risk for chronic diseases and conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and cancer. Moreover, you will feel better, be more productive at home and at work, manage stress easier and sleep better.

## What fits into fitness? Being fit consists of physical activity within these five components:

- **Cardiorespiratory:** The ability to move your body in a dynamic way with moderate-to-high intensity over a prolonged period of time. This includes walking, running, cycling, swimming, aerobics classes, hiking and more. It's important to find what you like, but also to have variety so your body does not become accustomed to one activity.
- **Muscle strength:** The maximum amount your muscles can lift at one time. An example of muscle strength might be lifting a heavy box from the floor onto the counter.
- **Muscle endurance:** The muscle's ability to lift things many times or hold for a period of time without fatigue or until fatigue sets in. A great example of this in your daily life is carrying bags of groceries from your car into your house.
- **Flexibility:** Stretching the muscles of the body to a point where you feel the muscles releasing. This is a component of fitness that is often overlooked and underutilized.
- **Body composition:** The relative amounts of muscle, bone, fat and vital organs of the body. This is often measured in body fat percentage.

## How can you be fit?

- Check with your doctor if you have any medical concerns or have never participated in an exercise plan.
- Start out slowly and listen to your body. If you feel considerable soreness, give your body time to rest and recuperate.
- Look for ways to get two and one half hours of moderate-to-intense activity per week, along with basic flexibility exercises. Add strength training on two or three non-consecutive days per week. This combination, along with healthy eating, will keep your body composition in check.
- Use the free Healthwise® Knowledgebase to find fitness ideas and interactive tools. Go to [fallonhealth.org](http://fallonhealth.org). Under Quick links, click Healthwise® Knowledgebase. Once you're there, either search "fitness" or click Interactive Tools.

Get paid to get fit with It Fits!\* Fallon Health's It Fits! program is a fitness reimbursement program to use toward gym memberships, Pilates and yoga classes, Weight Watchers® programs, school and town sports programs, ski passes, road race fees and a variety of other healthy activities. Get physical and financial benefits for being active, and feel better, too!

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