



FITNESS

By Sagdrina Jalal

Think of someone whom you would consider fit. Lance Armstrong? Serena Williams? Michael Phelps? While these are all extraordinary athletes (and assumably extremely fit), where exactly does that leave the rest of us? What does it mean for the average Joe (or Jill) to achieve true fitness?

First let's talk about what fitness is NOT. It is not about being skinny or having big muscles. It is not about an obsession with weight or body image. It is the body's ability to perform daily activities at its full potential. As potential can vary significantly from person to person, the definition of fitness is very individual. When evaluating one's level of fitness, there are five components to consider:

Cardiovascular Endurance: The heart and lungs ability to supply the oxygen and fuel necessary to perform well during physical exercise. This is also known as aerobic fitness. A test known as the Cooper test is a widely accepted measurement of cardio fitness.

Muscular Strength: The ability of a muscle (or muscle group) to exert force against moderately heavy resistance. The push up test is one of the most common test used to determine muscular strength.

Muscular Endurance: The ability of a muscle to perform an exercise many times or to hold a position for an extended period of time. The sit up test is performed to evaluate muscular endurance.

Flexibility: The ability of joints to move in a full range of motion and for muscles to relax, stretch and lengthen. The sit and reach test is a common tool used to measure



flexibility.

Body Composition: The relationship between fat and muscle. This can be best determined by body fat percentage but a height to weight ratio (also known as Body Mass Index) is also a good place to start.

It is generally the case that upon evaluation, one may find that their fitness level is high in one area while needing improvement in another. Some people spend countless hours bench pressing at the gym but can't run to the mailbox. A comprehensive program will address all five of the physical fitness components; creating a balanced approach to working out.

Fitness is a lifetime pursuit. A person who is 'fit focused' puts health and wellness at the top of their priority list, achieving goals and immediately setting new ones!

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