

If you've come to Beef Tips looking for fitness tips, then there is a good chance you are considering joining Team Beef. Welcome to the Team! Whether you are a beginner or an experienced runner, we hope to give you some valuable fitness and nutrition tips. Before we get into specifics about setting your running goals, it is very important to develop a fitness base. This article will give you the framework to help you build your fitness foundation.



The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport has the following recommendations for beginning a fitness program:

Fitness Fundamentals: Guidelines for Personal Exercise Programs *By Eric Lord, MS, CPT*

MAKING A COMMITMENT

You have taken the important first step on the path to physical fitness by seeking information. The next step is to decide that you are going to be physically fit. This article is designed to help you reach that decision and your goal.

The decision to carry out a physical fitness program cannot be taken lightly. It requires a lifelong commitment of time and effort. Exercise must become one of those things that you do without question, like bathing and brushing your teeth. Unless you are convinced of the benefits of fitness and the risks of unfitness, you will not succeed.

Patience is essential. Don't try to do too much too soon and don't quit before you have a chance to experience the rewards of improved fitness. You can't regain in a few days or weeks what you have lost in years of sedentary living, but you can get it back if you're persevering. And the prize is worth the price.

In the following pages you will find the basic information you need to begin and maintain a personal physical fitness program. These guidelines are intended for the average healthy adult. It tells you what your goals should be and how often, how long and how hard you must exercise to achieve them. It also includes information that will make your workouts easier, safer and more satisfying. The rest is up to you.



CHECKING YOUR HEALTH

If you're under 35 and in good health, you don't need to see a doctor before beginning an exercise program. But if you are over 35 and have been inactive for several years, you should consult your physician, who may or may not recommend a graded exercise test. Other conditions that indicate a need for medical clearance are:

- High blood pressure.
- Heart trouble.
- Family history of early stroke or heart attack deaths.
- Frequent dizzy spells.
- Extreme breathlessness after mild exertion.
- Arthritis or other bone problems.
- Severe muscular, ligament or tendon problems.
- Other known or suspected disease.

Vigorous exercise involves minimal health risks for persons in good health or those following a doctor's advice. Far greater risks are presented by habitual inactivity and obesity.

DEFINING FITNESS

Physical fitness is to the human body what fine tuning is to an engine. It enables us to perform up to our potential. Fitness can be described as a condition that helps us look, feel and do our best. More specifically, it is:

“The ability to perform daily tasks vigorously and alertly, with energy left over for enjoying leisure- time activities and meeting emergency demands. It is the ability to endure, to bear up, to withstand stress, to carry on in circumstances where an unfit person could not continue, and is a major basis for good health and well-being.”

Physical fitness involves the performance of the heart and lungs, and the muscles of the body. And, since what we do with our bodies also affects what we can do with our minds, fitness influences to some degree qualities such as mental alertness and emotional stability.

As you undertake your fitness program, it's important to remember that fitness is an individual quality that varies from person to person. It is influenced by age, sex, heredity, personal habits, exercise and eating practices. You can't do anything about the first three factors. However, it is within your power to change and improve the others where needed.



KNOWING THE BASICS

Physical fitness is most easily understood by examining its components, or “parts.” There is widespread agreement that these four components are basic:

Cardiorespiratory Endurance - the ability to deliver oxygen and nutrients to tissues, and to remove wastes, over sustained periods of time. Long runs and swims are among the methods employed in measuring this component.

Muscular Strength - the ability of a muscle to exert force for a brief period of time. Upper-body strength, for example, can be measured by various weight-lifting exercises.

Muscular Endurance - the ability of a muscle, or a group of muscles, to sustain repeated contractions or to continue applying force against a fixed object. Pushups are often used to test endurance of arm and shoulder muscles.

Flexibility - the ability to move joints and use muscles through their full range of motion. The sit-and-reach test is a good measure of flexibility of the lower back and backs of the upper legs.

Body Composition is often considered a component of fitness. It refers to the makeup of the body in terms of lean mass (muscle, bone, vital tissue and organs) and fat mass. An optimal ratio of fat to lean mass is an indication of fitness, and the right types of exercises will help you decrease body fat and increase or maintain muscle mass.

Our next article we will break down the "parts" of physical fitness and demonstrate how to put them together to achieve your fitness goals.

Source: President's Council On Physical Fitness and Sport
<http://www.fitness.gov/fitness.htm>