



Fitness Assessment

It's always a good idea to take a fitness assessment prior to starting an exercise program or if you are going to significantly increase your level of activity. If you are going to work with a personal trainer, you might want to see if the trainer will take you through a fitness assessment, which is called the physical activity readiness questionnaire (PAR-Q). By definition, according to NASM, a comprehensive fitness assessment includes a series of measurements to aid in determining your current health and fitness level. Once your baseline health and fitness level has been established, your personal trainer can now recommend the most appropriate exercises for you.

Components of a Fitness Assessment:

Subjective Information –

General and medical history:

- Occupation
- Lifestyle
- Medical
- Personal Information

Objective Information

- Physiologic assessments (heart rate and blood pressure)
- Body Composition assessments ("Percent Body Fat")
- Cardiorespiratory assessments (YMCA 3-Minute Step Test or the Rockport Walk Test)
- Static Posture assessments (how you physically present yourself in stance, or without movement, reflects how your body is aligned and can indicate any muscle imbalances)
- Movement assessments (dynamic movements that further investigate the static postural assessment and look for other faulty body alignment not revealed during the static posture assessment)
- Performance assessments (can be used if you are looking to improve your athletic performance; some basis performance assessments are the push-up test, bench press strength assessment, and squat strength assessment)

Now, if you are not going to work with a personal trainer, you can still get ready to begin an exercise routine or program by answering the following PAR-Q questions from the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM):

- Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition or that you should participate in physical activity only as recommended by a doctor?
- Do you feel pain in your chest during physical activity?
- In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were don't doing physical activity?
- Do you lose your balance from dizziness? Do you ever lose consciousness?
- Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?

- Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs for your blood pressure or a heart condition?
- Do you know of any reason you should not participate in physical activity?

If you answered “yes” to one or more questions, if you are over 40 years of age and have recently been inactive, or if you are concerned about your health, consult a physician before taking a fitness test or substantially increasing your physical activity. If you answered “no” to each question, then it’s likely that you can safely begin exercising.

Prior to Exercise

Prior to beginning any exercise program, you should seek medical evaluation and clearance to engage in activity. Not all exercise programs are suitable for everyone, and some program may result in injury. Activities should be carried out at a pace that is comfortable for you. Furthermore, you should discontinue participation in any exercise activity that causes pain or discomfort. In such event, medical consultation should be immediately obtained.