

# What does being fit mean?

Being fit is relative. Having the ability to handle activities of daily living (ADL's) is a minimum level of fitness for which we should strive. Depending upon your individual circumstances, you may or may not consider yourself fit. For example, if you are able to walk one mile, should you consider yourself fit? Ask yourself a few questions before judging yourself too harshly:

Q: How old am I?

Q: What experience do I have with this type of exercise?

Q: When was the last time I exercised?

Q: Have I been ill?

Q: Do I have any limitations that can make exercise more challenging?

Q: What is my energy level?

Q: Am I within a healthy weight/body fat range?

All of these factors have a significant impact on how you approach fitness and what kind of goals may be reasonable for you. If you are young, have experience with exercise, have not been ill and have no limiting factors, if you're within an ideal weight range and have sufficient energy, then exercising for 30-60 minutes on most days, with at least a couple of those workouts being vigorous, should be attainable for you. If, on the other hand, you are older, haven't exercised in a long time, have not been well, have a physical limitation, and are overweight and energy deficient, then lighter exercise for 15-30 minutes on most days might be more appropriate for you.

So what does being fit mean? Let's look at the individual components of fitness:

**Muscular strength:** This is the ability to generate force for a short period of time. Strength training with body weight, dumbbells and bands - with heavy weight and low reps - will help you to achieve muscular strength.

**Muscular endurance:** The ability to sustain repeated muscle contractions using a light weight over an extended period of time will build muscular endurance.

**Aerobic capacity:** Jogging, swimming and any activity that increases the efficient use of oxygen defines aerobic capacity. A heart rate that is working between 65 – 85% of a person's maximum heart rate is ideal for most people trying to improve their aerobic capacity.

**Flexibility:** The ability of the joints to move through a full range of motion is flexibility. Stretching when the body is warm is the best way to increase flexibility.

**Balance:** Improving balance has many benefits, the least of which includes a decreased risk of falling. T'ai Chi is one of the best ways to improve your balance. In addition to balance as defined by increased ability to stay standing, it is also the balance created by training the body equally across all parts and components of fitness.

**Body Composition:** Staying within a body weight and body fat range that is ideal for your age, height and sex is not only good for your overall health, but also for your potential to increase your overall fitness level. Eating healthy and exercising will improve your body composition.

**So how fit are you?** Answer the questions and look at the components of fitness listed above. Are you exercising on most days? Are you capable of handling everyday physical activities such as getting in and out of a chair or car, putting groceries away, and picking up your small children? Are you working on all the components of fitness? If not, now may be the time to reassess your approach to fitness. A professional, certified personal trainer can help you to assess your current fitness level and create attainable goals and a path to get you there.

In the end, you're only as fit as you feel!