

## Physical Fitness

Physical fitness is a key aspect in order for one to live a healthy lifestyle. According to CudahyChamber.com, the definition of physical fitness is “an overall measure of physical attributes including cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, body composition and flexibility.” ([www.cudahychamber.com/gym\\_Glossary.htm](http://www.cudahychamber.com/gym_Glossary.htm)). Also, not included in this list is, aerobic fitness, which is also an important element of physical fitness. These various components of physical fitness help one to feel good physically and mentally. Aerobic fitness is incredibly important in order for one to be physically fit. Aerobic fitness refers to an individual’s endurance and can help one in many different ways. It is your ability to continue exercising for a certain amount of time. It helps you in sports to be able to run faster and longer. This could be the difference, when trying out for a specific sport for example, between making a team and not making it. The term “aerobic,” according to Dictionary.com, means “requiring the presence of air or free oxygen for life.” (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/aerobic>). Therefore, oxygen is necessary for exercise. Aerobic exercises consist of swimming, running, and biking. However, these aren’t the only forms of aerobic exercises. According to Aerobic Fitness Information.com, the most effective way to do aerobic exercises is by doing good but not maximum effort for about twelve minutes, then doing maximal effort for two to four minutes. Your aerobic fitness, according to the same website, “is highest at ages 18, 19 years in males and 15 to 20 years in females, and it decreases with age in adulthood” (<http://www.aerobictest.com/fitnessInfo.htm>). The less body fat you have, the better your aerobic fitness can be. If you don’t have cardiovascular fitness, then you might get out of shape, which could lead to being overweight. Thus, being overweight can cause many health problems and even decrease life span.

Despite their similarities, “muscular strength” and “muscular endurance” refer to two completely different things. According to About.com, muscular strength refers to “the amount of force a muscle can produce with a single maximum effort [and the] size of muscle cells and the ability of nerves to activate them are related to muscle strength”

(<http://weightloss.about.com/od/glossary/g/musclestrength.htm>). Muscular endurance, on the other hand, is, according to Ehow.com, “a muscle's ability to perform repeated contractions over a period of time without fatigue” ([http://www.ehow.com/about\\_5386944\\_meaning-muscular-endurance.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_5386944_meaning-muscular-endurance.html)). Having good muscular strength and endurance can potentially increase bone mass, reduce body fat, and decrease blood pressure help to maintain a good blood pressure. Having both strength and endurance will help to maintain great health because when you train for a specific sport/event, you burn a lot of fat.

There are many benefits of muscular endurance. One benefit is increased metabolism. Since getting muscular endurance burns body fat, it builds a quicker metabolism. Another benefit of muscular endurance is that your muscles have less of a chance to strain or tear. The most obvious benefit of endurance is the amount of time spent during a workout. Since your muscles have endurance, you can exercise longer and increase muscle strength. Muscle strength and muscular endurance go hand-in-hand. You can't have muscular strength without muscular endurance. Almost all sports require both and a lot of them. If you have no muscular strength or endurance, you don't have much energy to do anything else.

Flexibility is the ability to bend and flex oneself as much as they are comfortable. If you are very flexible, your joints can move a lot. If you aren't, your joints can be stiff and very painful. Having a good flexibility training program can help with your overall physical performance. If you're flexible, then your muscles can move easier, and you can do more in

your workout, which can possibly result in you being more physically fit. I have been told by several individuals, including my pediatrician, my parents, and my physical education teachers that stretching slowly after every exercise can reduce the possibility of having sore muscles. I have found, in my own routine, that the best way to do these stretches is to go slow and to hold the muscles for several minutes. A muscle that is in constant contraction needs more energy to do activities. That is why stretching can reduce pain. Stretching before exercising is also good because it can warm up your muscles and prepare them for exercise. Something most people don't know is that stretching increases circulation. The bottom line to any exercise program is to just stretch. It gives you benefits that you can't get from any other exercise. Flexibility is very important because if you're not flexible, then you will be stiff all the time and have a lot of joint pain.

Body composition is defined, according to Dictionary.com, as “the proportion of fat, muscle, and bone of an individual's body” (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/body+composition>). In other words, it's the measure of muscle compared to fat. You want your body composition to be more muscle than fat. It is important to maintain a good body composition because it can keep you from becoming overweight. Having good body composition can be very helpful because it will help you in your every-day life. It will make you feel better about yourself and look better. You will have more energy and be a happier person.

There are many problems associated with lack of body composition. One of those problems is being overweight. Another problem is that you don't look good and that can affect your self-confidence. To improve your body composition you have to exercise. A few exercises

to help improve your body composition would be running or playing any sport which causes you to sweat. A healthy diet will also help keep good body composition.

In Ithaca there are several places where you can purchase a membership to work out and participate in various types of exercise. “Planet Fitness” at the Ithaca Mall is one of these places as well as the “Island Health and Fitness,” which is located in downtown Ithaca. The cost of membership at the “YMCA,” which is also close to the Mall, is as follows according to their website:

Age	Monthly Rate	Yearly Rate
Young (15 & under)	\$20.00	\$240.00
Young Adult (16-25)	\$33.00	\$396.00
Adult	\$45.00	\$540.00
Senior (65+)	\$38.00	\$456.00
Family Regular	\$82.00	\$984.00
Couple or Single-Parent Family	\$70.00	\$840.00

([http://www.ymcabrandon.com/page.aspx?page\\_id=43](http://www.ymcabrandon.com/page.aspx?page_id=43)).

Of course, you don’t need to join a gym in order to exercise. You can get outside and get physically fit, regardless of what the climate is. There are several summer activities (soccer, bike riding, basketball, tennis, swimming, etc.) and several winter activities (skating, snowboarding, skiing, etc.) which can help you get your daily amount of exercise.

Personally, I think that physical fitness is extremely important. Being physically fit can help you feel better about yourself, improve your overall health, and even increase your life span. In my life I play sports, try to eat healthy most of the time and do my own personal exercises. I think that my aerobic fitness is good but could definitely improve. I feel that I have a decent amount of muscular strength and endurance, and I think that I am pretty flexible but can always

work on improvement. My body composition isn't the best, but I don't feel that it's awful, and I'm always working to improve it. I feel that my strength would have to be aerobic fitness because I can run for a long time without stopping, which I feel that my weakness would probably be body composition.

I feel that I am in a daily routine with my exercising, and when I leave high school in four years, I hope to continue exercising as much as I can as well as continuing to eat right. In the meantime, I'll try harder to improve my overall physical fitness.