**The 5 Components**

**of Physical Fitness**

The 5 **components of physical fitness** are used in schools, gyms and health clubs to measure your level of physical fitness. Total fitness is defined by how well your body performs in each of 5 categories.

Here's what you should know about the 5 components of physical fitness.

**The Components of Physical Fitness**

The five components of physical fitness are:

* Cardiovascular endurance
* Muscle strength
* Muscle endurance
* Flexibility
* Body composition

These 5 components measure your body's ability to use oxygen as fuel, your muscular strength and endurance, the flexibility of your joints and your total body fat.

A range of tests are used to measure these components. Once you've been tested in all five components, a physical fitness regimen can be tailored to your specific needs.

**Cardiovascular Endurance**

Cardiovascular endurance refers to the ability of your heart and lungs to work together to fuel your body with oxygen. The Cooper Run is most often used to test cardiovascular endurance. Aerobic conditioning, like jogging, swimming and cycling, can help improve cardiovascular endurance.

**Muscle Strength**

Muscle strength refers to the amount of force a muscle can exert, in a single effort. Exercises like the bench press, leg press or bicep curl might be used to measure muscle strength.

**Muscle Endurance**

Muscle endurance refers to the ability of a muscle to perform a continuous effort without fatiguing. Cycling, step machines and sit up tests are often used to measure muscular endurance.

**Flexibility**

Flexibility refers to the ability of each joint to express its full range of motion. Flexibility can be tested by stretching individual muscles or by performing exercises such as the lunge or the sit and reach.

**Body Composition**

Body composition refers to the amount of body fat you have, versus the amount of lean muscles, bones and organs. There are several tests that can be used to measure body composition. The most reliable is underwater weighing, but due to the size and expense of the equipment, this type of test isn't common. Many doctors, gyms and health clubs use a pinch test instead.

**Improving Individual Components**

Once you've had your own 5 components of physical fitness measured, you can use this information to form a fitness regimen tailored to your needs. If you're weak in cardiovascular endurance, you'll need aerobic conditioning in the form of jogging, swimming, cycling or even sports. Strength training exercises can help improve muscular strength; a strength training exercise that uses low weight and high reps can help improve muscular endurance.

Yoga and pilates can help improve overall flexibility. Following good exercise practices can also help; warm up and stretch before your workouts, then cool down and stretch after to keep your muscles from shortening. Flexibility often improves rapidly with practice. The more you exercise, the lower your body mass index should become as you lose weight.

An effective fitness program includes all 5 components of physical fitness. While it's acceptable to emphasize exercises for one or more weaker components, be sure not to neglect the others. Also, any strenuous exercise in one muscle group or fitness component should be followed by 24 to 48 hours of rest for that area, to allow it to recover.