

5 Essential Aspects of Fitness

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Health is the fundamental human good or human need. The others are *wealth, pleasure, relationships, knowledge and skills, and liberty*. * None of these fundamental goods/needs of all humans is quite as attainable, accessible or enjoyable without good health. Developed together they allow us to more successfully pursue happiness. “The first wealth is health”, observed [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#).

Fitness is an essential aspect of health. Physical fitness may be defined broadly as being fit to a task or demand. Consider how many daily, normal activities are limited by our physical fitness. Sports and games, group outdoor activities, playing with our children and grandchildren, chores around the house or at work, travel, attending large events and even shopping.

Physical fitness may also be more narrowly defined and therefore better understood as having five essential aspects. All five of these aspects of physical fitness are essential to being optimally fit for sports, games, play, work and just being ready for life’s opportunities, challenges and demands. Physical fitness includes:

1. Aerobic Capacity (Cardio-vascular/respiratory capacity)
2. Body Composition (Ratio of body fat to lean body mass)
3. Muscle Strength
4. Muscle Endurance
5. Muscle Flexibility

We may enjoy more of one than another of these essential aspects of fitness. An imbalance in fitness is quite common: The marathon runner who lacks muscle flexibility or strength, and so therefore is more prone to injury or limited performance. Or, the weight-lifting football lineman who, despite his strength, lacks aerobic conditioning and may even be obese. Too often, we are deficient in all five areas, and are simply unfit or de-conditioned (or “low fit” rather than fit or “high fit”). But, to enjoy general physical fitness and optimal health, we need to pursue and maintain all five essential aspects of fitness. We all **need** training and conditioning for fitness. We all **need** fitness to be optimally healthy.

Each of these essential aspects of fitness has its own definition, modes of measurement, and methods of training and maintaining each. To learn more about each of these, refer to my other articles on each of these aspects of fitness.

*See Aristotle’s Ethics, and Mortimer Adler’s Six Great Ideas. Some things we’ve known for a long time, like wanting to be “healthy, wealthy and wise”. We can be healthier, wealthier and wiser.