

# Family Fitness

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## Social & Emotional Benefits

When exercise is incorporated into daily life, people tend to have higher self esteem and lower rates of depression. Through extensive studies, Larry has found that in people with similar trials and stress levels, those who exercised perceived their problems to be less severe and could cope better. Socially there are also many benefits to exercising, including fostering relationships.

## Exercise

For optimum health and fitness, you need to perform three main kinds of exercise:

1. Strength

Resistive, or strength training, is by far the best activity to increase strength. Going to the gym to lift weights, for example, builds strength. The single best way to increase your metabolism is to get muscle tone.

When you're young it is easier to build strength but it gets more difficult when you're older. As we get older strength training builds muscles to assist with daily activities. People may find it hard to get out of a chair, carry a bag of groceries, mow the lawn, go up stairs, lift themselves from a wheel chair or carry a child if they do not have not build their strength. This can often resulting in injury.

2. Stretching

Stretching can help prevent injury to the muscles and enables a range of motion in the body, especially in underused limbs. Regular flexibility exercises can also limit the likelihood of pulling muscles.

Young people tend to have very good natural flexibility but as you age, you lose flexibility—a serious problem. It becomes difficult to comb hair or pick up things from the ground.

3. Endurance

A vigorous activity to break a sweat such as walking, jogging or any continuous activity builds endurance. Keith suggests using a log to measure your heart rate, distance and speed to measure your progress in building endurance.

## Creating a Program for You & Your Family

Before creating a program, remember to first get checked out by a physician so as not to exacerbate a problem. Everyone has different situations. For example, overweight individuals may need to walk and not jog. Exercise should not be a painful routine. If you have pain and the pain subsists we should get it checked out, try to rehabilitate and then get back to an exercise program.

Interested in getting fit as a family? Find exciting ways to improve physical fitness in your family through [99 tips for Family Fitness Fun \(http://www.shapeup.org/pubs/99tips/index.html\)](http://www.shapeup.org/pubs/99tips/index.html) from Shape Up America and the National Association for Sports and Physical Education. Ideas include:

- Rake leaves and jump in
- Shovel snow, build a snow sculpture or snow house, make snow angels
- Dig and plant a garden
- Chop and stack wood and then have a campfire and sing-a-long
- Take a long walk or jog on the beach
- Cross country ski around town or in the woods
- Use a compass to map out a course - then set out on a walk, jog, or bike hike
- Canoe or raft for an entire afternoon
- Ice skate
- Play mixed-age water volleyball

## Fitness Tips

Keith and Larry gave suggestions for a healthy workout and rewarding lifestyle:

- Schedule a regular time throughout the week for physical activity.
- Adapt all activities to suit those with special needs and preferences.
- Schedule a regular time throughout the week for physical activity.
- Limit time spent watching television programs, videotapes, and playing computer games.
- Discover what free and low-cost physical activity areas are near your home (park, bike trail, hiking trail, tennis court, swimming pool, etc.).

## Avoiding Burn-out

People lose motivation, get too busy, gain weight and give up. The most important thing to remember is to just keep going. Try changing your workout routine, working out with a friend or slowing down.

## Physical Disabilities

Keith noticed that many people with physical disabilities excuse themselves from exercise, believing they have a viable excuse. However, exercise is more important when a person is physically limited because it can ward against greater physical complications.

For instance, it is important to maintain flexibility for a person in a wheelchair. Sitting all day can cause the legs to contract if stretching is not done regularly. Endurance is also the key in wheelchair sports. Remember to always consult a physician about exercise routines.

## Further Reading

Building Strength and Stamina

*by Wayne Westcott*

Effective Strength Training

*by Douglas Brooks*

Resistance Training Instruction

*by Everett Aeberg*

Women's Fitness Program Development

*by Ann F. Cowlin*

Developmental/Adapted Physical Education

*by Michael Horvat, Carl Eichstaedt, Leonard Kalakiam and Ron Croce*

"Running Away from it All"

*by S. Scott Zimmerman*

*Ensign, Feb. 1981*

"Focusing on Family Fitness"

*Handbook for Families*

*Ensign, Sept. 1990*

## Web Resources

[Provident Living: Exercise & Fitness](http://www.providentliving.org/content/list/0,11664,2410-1,00.html)

<http://www.providentliving.org/content/list/0,11664,2410-1,00.html>

[FitnessOnline.com](http://www.fitnessonline.com)

<http://www.fitnessonline.com>

[Fitnesszone.com](http://www.fitnesszone.com)

<http://www.fitnesszone.com>

[Exercise-n-Fitness.com](http://www.exercise-n-fitness.com)

<http://www.exercise-n-fitness.com>

[NetSweat.com](http://www.netsweat.com)

<http://www.netsweat.com>

[DietBusters.co.uk](http://www.dietbusters.co.uk)

<http://www.dietbusters.co.uk>