

Key Components of Exercise

Fitness is good for everyone. Being active can help you stay healthy, control your weight, improve balance and keep you from getting hurt.

Here are the 4 key elements that can help make your fitness plan complete. A complete plan includes a variety of activities that benefit your whole body so you can stay fit and healthy for as long as possible.

One: Cardiovascular activity, or simply, cardio, and often called aerobic activity makes your heart and lungs stronger. With cardio activities, you know you're doing them when you breathe harder and your heart beats faster.

And over time, cardio does a lot for your body.

It can lower blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, body fat, anxiety and depression, and fatigue.

Two: Strength or resistance training. Resistance training means using weights, exercise bands, equipment, or certain body exercises to make your muscles stronger. Muscles get stronger when you use them. Muscle fitness can help protect your joints, lower stress, and build stronger bones.

Three: Stretching for flexibility. Flexibility means being able to move your joints and muscles through their full range of motion. Stretch all your major groups of muscles. These include the muscles of your arms, your back, your hips, the front and back of your thighs, and your calves. As you become more flexible, you will find it easier to reach things on high shelves, look under a bed, or even tie your shoes.

Four: Balance. Balance is defined as your ability to safely control your body position. Balance is one of those things you can improve at any age.

Training can include simply standing on one foot for a few seconds or walking in a straight line.

People may use tai chi, yoga and qi gong to work on their balance. Having better balance can help prevent you from a fall or an injury.

Some activities involve more than one kind of fitness. For example, some aerobic exercises such as swimming or cycling also strengthen muscles.

Moderate activity is safe for most people. But it's always a good idea to talk to your doctor before becoming more active, especially if you haven't been very active in awhile or have health problems.

No matter what activities you choose, the goal is to make exercise a habit that becomes a regular part of your life.

The key is to find an activity you like. If you enjoy it, you're more likely to keep doing it which is good for your body and overall health.