

Test Your Fitness Level

Take the President's Challenge Test!

As grade-school and middle-school children, we were all subjected to the President's Physical Fitness Test, which served to measure our performance and health-related fitness abilities. As an adult, you can take a similar test to detect where your health could improve.

Getting Started...

Recruit a friend to take this test with you and log on to www.adultfitnessstest.org. This site will give you directions on how to perform each step of the challenge. Here are the components of the test:

Aerobic Fitness

Aerobic fitness relates to how well your heart, blood vessels and lungs work together to deliver oxygen-rich blood to your muscles during exercise. A high level of aerobic fitness lowers your risk of several diseases, including coronary heart disease and high blood pressure. To test your aerobic fitness, choose to:

- Engage in a one-mile walk on a treadmill or track. Take

your heart rate at the end of the test.

- Engage in a 1½-mile run on a treadmill (at zero incline) or on a track.

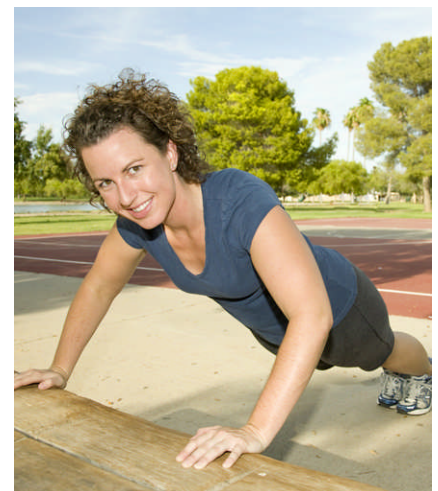
Muscle Strength and Endurance

Muscle strength and endurance is critical in performing everyday tasks (such as housecleaning) and maintaining a healthy physique as you age. To test your muscle strength and endurance:

- Perform the Half Sit-Up Test. Place four strips of tape three and a half inches apart. Lie face-up on a mat with your knees at a right angle and your feet flat on the floor. Lay your hands with your palms facing downward and your fingers touching the first piece of tape. Then, flatten your back to the mat and do a half sit-up so that your fingers move from the first piece of tape to the second piece. You should feel your hands touching the tape. Then return your shoulders to the mat and repeat the movement. Count the number of sit-ups performed in one minute.

- Perform the Standard or Modified Push-Up Test. Men should push their bodies up and down using the muscles in the arms, shoulders and chest. Women can reduce their load by having their knees touching the floor to act as a pivot point, or they can perform traditional push-ups. Individuals should lower their chests until they are two inches from the ground and then rise up again. Perform the test until you cannot do any more push-ups while keeping your back straight.

These tests indicate abdominal and upper-body strength, which is pivotal in preventing injuries.



Flexibility

Being able to move your joints freely is important for their function as well as being able to walk, lift and step normally. To measure flexibility:

- Perform the Sit-and-Reach Test. Place a yardstick on the floor and put a long piece of tape over the 15-inch mark at the right angle of the stick. Then, remove your shoes and sit on the floor with the yardstick between your legs (0 being closest to your groin). Your heels should be at the 14-inch mark at the start of the test. Slowly stretch forward with both hands as far as possible and note where your fingertips reach to the closest inch. Exhale when you stretch forward and drop your head to allow you to stretch further. Perform this test three times and record the best measurement.

Body Composition

BodyMass Index (BMI) and waist circumference are good indicators of being overweight or obese, which correlates to the risk of disease and death. To calculate your body composition:

- BMI: Measure your height and weight. Then log into <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/> to calculate your BMI. Those with a BMI under 18.5 are

underweight; those between 18.5 and 24.9 are normal weight; those between 25 and 29.9 are overweight; those between 30 and 39.9 are obese; and those greater than 40 are extremely obese.

- Waist Circumference: Stand upright and have your partner wrap a tape measure around your bare abdomen above your hip bones. Pull the tape measure so that it is snug without compressing the skin. Record the measurement in inches.

Once you have completed all of these tests, log into www.adultfitnesstest.org again to input your results. The Website will then tell you how fit you truly are.

For the Future...

To improve your physical fitness, consider implementing these rituals into your schedule:

- Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity five or more days a week.
- To manage your body weight and prevent gradual weight gain as you age, incorporate 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity five or more days a week into your routine.
- In order to sustain weight loss, 60 to 90 minutes of

daily moderate-intensity exercise may be necessary.

- For both weight maintenance and loss, keep food intake (calories) to a level that is equal to or less than the amount of calories that you burn throughout the day.

Did you know...?

There are two types of fitness: performance and health-related. Performance-related fitness is linked to athletic ability, speed, reaction time and coordination. Health-related fitness is linked to components that may lower your risk of diseases, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and lower back pain.