



Healthy Heart - A Fat Lot of Good

As a KFA member you have an interest in keeping active with a healthy lifestyle. Heart disease is one, if not, the biggest killer in this country. The benefits of heart fitness, sometimes referred to as cardiovascular-respiratory fitness or stamina are as follows: -

- The heart becomes stronger and can push out more blood with each beat but with less effort.
- The lungs are able to take in more oxygen and use it more effectively.
- The vascular system and all the blood vessels, which deliver oxygen and nutrients to where the body needs them, takes away deoxygenated blood and waste products therefore works more efficiently.

The question is: - How can we achieve all the above benefits?

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has revised its health and fitness guidelines. Their recommendations concerning cardiovascular-respiratory fitness remain, that it is activities that involve large muscle groups which are rhythmical and aerobic in nature should be performed 3-5 days per week. It would be most desirable if the length of time each session lasted was between 20–60 minutes. However, the ACSM now recommends either continuous or intermittent aerobic activity and that the intermittent approach should be a minimum of 10 minutes at a time. In one day you could do two or three 10 minute sessions all of which can have a health-related benefit. Or you could do a 30 to 60 minute session. It is very much up to you and what you can fit in. The aerobic activity should be of sufficient intensity to get mildly out of breath. They further recommend that if working at a lower to moderate intensity the activity should be carried out over a longer period of time, say 30 minutes. This creates less potential for injury.

Walking, cycling, jogging, rowing, step, running, skipping, skating and of course a KFA class are all activities that involve rhythmical use of large muscle groups. These are aerobic in nature provided the movements are performed for a prolonged period of time at a sufficient level of intensity (mildly out of breath).



In addition to your weekly KFA class/es it is important that you select an aerobic activity that you enjoy, otherwise you will lose motivation and will not keep it going.

Another incentive for taking up these activities is that they burn body fat so not only will you gain a fitter heart you will also burn fat. However, physical activity alone may not produce a noticeable reduction of fat. You need to review your eating habits. Don't forget that diet plays an important part in heart health. Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day and foods that are low in saturated fat (see article on FAT).

If you do become much more active you may find your body weight goes up! This is because you have developed more muscle which weighs more than fat. Also more muscle needs more energy which means a greater chance of burning fat.

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