



Are you fit enough?

Most of us know that we really should try to get a bit fitter. But how fit is fit enough? Much depends on your personal goals. You might not be fit enough to run a marathon (no shame there) but maybe you are still fit enough to jog around the park without collapsing in a heap afterwards (always a bonus).

If you're already super fit, or even just fairly fit, that's excellent. But if you have a teeny suspicion that you're not in such fine form, it may be worth checking whether you are maintaining a sufficient level of fitness to protect your long-term health.

Why fitness is important to your future

Staying fit and active can not only make you look and feel much better, but just 30 minutes a day of moderate activity can also reduce your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke¹.

The British Heart Foundation suggests that, "Only about 37 percent of men and 25 percent of women in England are physically active enough to benefit their health. But 80 percent of people think they are active enough."

So how do you know if you really are maintaining a basic fitness level for good health? There are various ways to work out your current fitness level, but here are two simple ways that you can test your fitness at home, without any fancy equipment.

Test your resting heart rate

A simple way to assess your fitness level is to count your resting heart rate (RHR). Your resting heart rate is the number of times your heart beats each minute when you are at rest. The lower the RHR the better. As your fitness levels increase, your resting heart rate should gradually decrease over time.

Test your RHR first thing in the morning before you get up, by placing two fingers on your wrist beneath your thumb and finding your pulse beat. Then simply count the number of beats within 60 seconds, counting up from zero on the first beat.

Results:

- 60 or less = good
- 61-80 = average
- 81-100 = high, but acceptable
- 101 or more = abnormally high

Check your waistline

Men and women who are not physically active are more than twice as likely as to have a 'raised waist circumference' than those with high levels of physical activity.

A raised waist circumference is a way of identifying people with central obesity (that's being apple shaped or having a fat belly, to you and me) and is defined by the National Heart Forum² as being a waist measurement of 102cm (40 inches) or more in men and 88cm (35 inches) or more in women.

Why is your waistline so important to your overall health? Well, women aged 35 and over, with waist measurement of 35 inches or more, are four times more likely to have type 2 diabetes and are at risk of developing cardiovascular disease³.

If your resting heart beat is higher than ideal and your waist circumference is raised, it's definitely time to look at increasing your activity levels to improve your general fitness.

References

1. <http://www.bhf.org.uk/thinkfit/article.asp?secID=1590&secondlevel=1591&thirdlevel=1612>
2. http://www.heartforum.org.uk/images/Overweight_ObesityToolkit_02.pdf
3. <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/opan08/OPAD%20Jan%202008%20final%20v7%20with%20links%20and%20buttons%20-%20NS%20logo%20removed%2020112008.pdf>

A wide range of women's health resources are available at www.healthywomen.org.uk

Disclaimer: This article is for general information only and is not intended to replace a consultation with a healthcare professional, nor is it intended to provide specific medical advice and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions.

© Copyright Bayer plc 2009 Last reviewed: March 19th 2009 Doc ID: Oi68 Version: 1
