

Focus on Fitness-Want REAL Results?

By Lisa Schilling RN

Most people who hate to exercise are focusing on the wrong thing. They focus on their fatness and not their fitness. When you exercise only to lose weight, you miss out on the benefits of developing your fitness. Most people miss this due to not fully understanding how to build fitness and measure their progress. Knowing what to do and how to evaluate your progress will greatly improve your perceptions of exercise. It can create anticipation for healthy behaviors instead of dread.

One way to discover if you are actually improving your fitness is to learn ways to evaluate if your **heart and lungs** are benefiting from your efforts. Improved cardiopulmonary function would show a faster timed distance completion, lower post exercise heart rate, lower resting heart rate, and increased heart rate recovery time after exertion. When you improve cardiopulmonary fitness, your lungs create more oxygenated blood and your heart will respond by circulating that oxygenated blood throughout the body to your vital organs and muscles. This usually means that the heart can work more efficiently and with less effort (smarter not harder). This is another important benefit of improved fitness, an improvement that will give you more energy and stamina. It is achieved by **progressively** challenging the cardiopulmonary system through working in your target heart zone.

When exercising you need to work at a pace that keeps your heart rate in that target zone. Knowing your numbers and checking your heart rate every 5 to 10 minutes will help you to determine if you need to work at a more intense pace or if you need to slow down. You can achieve a progressive challenge by picking up your pace, swinging your arms or adding short bursts of exertion followed by recovery. Any less than your target heart rate and you will not significantly improve your cardiopulmonary fitness. It will burn

calories, and it is weight bearing exercise, but without the working in the target heart range, you will not see the results that most people are hoping for.

Fat burning will be enhanced when you work at your target heart rate for 20+ minutes. The goal of weight loss is achieved by a creating a negative calorie balance. You need to **reduce 500 calories per day to lose 1 pound per week**. That can be burning 500 more calories in exercise, or reducing it from you food intake. A combination of both is **best** for your overall health. To lose more weight you must create a bigger negative calorie balance. I recommend losing no more than 2 pounds per week. Beyond that, you will lose water weight and unfortunately muscle mass. Losing muscle is the biggest reason people gain back the weight that they lose during targeted weight loss efforts. Muscle is metabolically active and burns calories a faster rate. Lack or loss of muscle contributes to a slower metabolism

Another issue is increasing your muscle tone and strength. This is done through **progressively** overloading your muscles through weight bearing exercise. Machines are a great way to do that. You need to determine the proper weight to use per machine and how to progress that. You must choose a weight that will challenge you as you do slow controlled flexion and extension. Start with 8-10 repetitions in good form. You must learn to control the weight stack and not use momentum to propel or drop the weights. Quality of reps is more important to your progress than the quantity you do. It is also important to stretch before and after exercise to increase your flexibility and to increase joint range of motion. Things may not happen fast, but when you commit to progressively challenging your heart, lungs and muscle, you will begin to see positive changes in your tone and shape along with your energy and endurance. Start today and create a lifestyle that produces REAL results.