How often, how long, how hard you exercise, and what kinds of exercises you perform should be determined by what you are trying to accomplish. Making the best out of your workout depends primarily on your goals, your present fitness level, age, health, skills, and interest.

Your exercise program should include something from each of the four basic fitness components: cardio-respiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility. Each workout should begin with a warm-up and end with a cool-down. As a general rule, space your workouts throughout the week and avoid consecutive days of hard exercise.

Here are the amounts of activity necessary for the average, healthy person to maintain a minimum level of overall fitness. Included are some of the popular exercises for each category.

- **WARMUP** - Five to ten minutes of exercises such as walking, slow jogging, knee lifts, arm circles or trunk rotations. Low intensity movements that stimulate movements to be used in the activity can also be included in the warm-up.

- **MUSCULAR STRENGTH** - a minimum of two 20-minute sessions per week that include exercises for all the major muscle groups. Lifting weights is the most effective way to increase strength.

- **MUSCULAR ENDURANCE** - at least three 30-minute sessions each week that include exercises such as calisthenics, pushups, sit-ups, pull-ups, and weight training for all the major muscle groups.

- **CARDIORESPIRATORY ENDURANCE** - at least three 20-minute bouts of continuous aerobic (activity requiring oxygen) rhythmic exercise each week. Popular aerobic conditioning activities include brisk walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, rope-jumping, rowing, cross-country skiing, and some continuous action games like racquetball and handball.

- **FLEXIBILITY** - 10-12 minutes of daily stretching exercises performed slowly without a bouncing motion. This can be included after a warm-up or during a cool-down.

- **COOL DOWN** - a minimum of 5-10 minutes of slow walking, low-level exercise, combined with stretching.

Although exercise is not technique or concentration intensive, proper technique is still very important to optimize your efficiency and prevent injuries. It is recommended to obtain advice from a trainer prior to beginning an exercise regimen to effectively perform basic exercise methods that are best for you.

Source: [www.bodytrends.com](http://www.bodytrends.com)
Is Weight Loss Possible?  

By Nancy A. Copeland

In America today, poor diets consist of foods that are too high in calories and fat and too low in fruits and vegetables. Cheese and meat consumption are at record levels, fiber intake is at an all time low, and snack foods low in nutrient dense content are among the most popular food of choice. The top three selling snacks in the United States are popcorn, potato chips, and coming in third are tortilla chips. In addition, 18 billion quarts of popcorn is consumed each year in America.

Americans spend an average of 31 million dollars on snack foods compared to 16 million dollars for fruits per year. The total vending sales in America was over 32 billion dollars in 1997 and this continues to increase each year. Among others, these problems are associated with obesity. A century ago, poor nutrition intake was centered around the inadequate consumption of vitamins and minerals, resulting in such deformities as beriberi, scurvy, and rickets. Eating in a developed country like the United States becomes a social, business, and family event. An act of pleasure that goes far beyond the ingestion of necessary nutrients to sustain life. Societal influences, pressures, and attitudes affect our eating habits. A heavier population means that people are not balancing energy intake with energy use. Americans are eating more and exercising less, which leads to this question, “Is weight loss possible?”

Is weight loss possible? This is a question that is asked by over 38.8 million Americans each year that are suffering from the weight afflictions of being overweight or obese. Recent results of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 1999 indicate that an estimated 44% of U.S. adults are classified as obese. (Obesity Trends)

There are many health risks associated with being overweight. Two ways to implement weight management is through diet and exercise. These days there are many popular fad diets on the market, such as the low carbohydrate, protein, and the Hollywood diets. These diets are designed to assist a person who is interested in gaining immediate gratification. However, when losing weight, there is no quick fix. For each individual, it takes determination, discipline, and balance to successfully lose weight and maintain it throughout one’s life. Determination plays a major part in weight loss because once a person makes up their mind to lose weight, it makes it much easier to follow a routine. Discipline is needed since the routine being followed may be very different from the previous lifestyle that the individual is accustomed to living. Balance is an important facet of losing weight. Balance is needed in the selection of food and physical activity. Such foods as vegetables, fruits, and grains must be included in the diet on a daily basis. In losing weight, physical activity such as cardio and muscle strength building activities play an important role in burning excess fat and losing weight.

Foods containing combinations of nutrients and other healthful substances are best. No single food can supply all nutrients in the amounts needed for basic survival. For example, oranges provide vitamin C but no vitamin B12. Whereas, cheese provides vitamin B12 but no vitamin C. To make sure that all of the nutrients and other substances needed for health are consumed daily, choose the recommended number of daily servings from each of the five major food groups displayed in the Food Guide Pyramid. Choosing a variety of foods within and across food groups improves dietary patterns because foods within the same group have different combinations of nutrients and other beneficial substances. For example, some vegetables and fruits are good sources of vitamin C or vitamin A, while others are high in folate; still others are good sources of calcium or iron. Choosing a variety of foods within each group also helps to make your meals more interesting from day to day. This also makes it easier for one to stick a lifestyle of healthy behavior, rather than a “quick fix” diet.

Is weight loss possible? It certainly is if there is a balance between dietary allowances and physical activity. It is important to understand your body type and what is best for you. If you are sedentary, try to become more active. Try to continue the same level of activity as you age. More physical activity is better than less, and any is better than none. Enjoy eating a variety of foods. Get the many nutrients your body needs by choosing among the varied foods you enjoy from these groups: grain products, vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products, protein-rich plant foods (beans, nuts), and protein-rich animal foods (lean meat, poultry, fish, and eggs). Remember to choose lean and low fat foods and beverages most often. For vegetarians and vegans, consulting a nutritionist is best for an assortment of substitutions for animal products.

To find out more about the nutrition content of your favorite fast foods and restaurants, as well as low fat recipes, please visit www.3fatchicks.com.

Sources:
1. http://hermes.ecn.purdue.edu
2. www.nutrition.gov
3. www.cdc.gov (Obesity Trends)
Aerobic exercise is defined as "any activity that uses large muscle groups, can be maintained continuously, and is rhythmic in nature." It is a type of exercise that overloads the heart and lungs and causes them to work harder than at rest. The important idea behind aerobic exercise today, is to get up and get moving!!

Care and consideration should be used in selecting the types of aerobic exercises you choose to perform. Selecting a particular type of exercise depends on your goals, physical condition, and illness/injury history. However, it is a good idea to alternate between several exercises. This strategy reduces the chances of injuries, imposes a more balanced conditioning stimulus, and may ultimately enhance enjoyment.

The benefits of aerobic exercise include:
- Control of body fat
- Increased resistance to fatigue and extra energy
- Toned muscles and increased lean body mass
- Decreased tension and aid in sleeping
- Increased general stamina
- Improves mood and reduces depression and anxiety

There are numerous types of aerobic exercises that can jump start your way to a new and healthy body such as bicycling, running, swimming, in-line skating, walking rope, skiing, stair climbing, and dancing. Additional benefits to an aerobic workout are that it conditions the heart and lungs to increase oxygen to the body and enables the heart to use the oxygen more efficiently.

You should allow time for an aerobic workout at least 3 to 5 days a week. Weekly workouts will allow you to maintain your fitness levels, and the more you perform aerobic exercises the more important your health becomes.

If your goal is to lead a balanced lifestyle and enhance your health and well being, keep in mind that it is very important to perform aerobic exercise regularly even if the intensity is low or the duration is short. The bottom line for health and well being enhancement is to make time for some frequent aerobic activity during the week, take it easy, and enjoy yourself!

There are more activities than ever to choose from, whether it is a new activity or an old one. Find something you enjoy doing that keeps your heart rate elevated for a continuous time period and get moving to a healthier life.

Source: www.gsu.edu

Muscular Strength is defined as the maximum force that can be exerted by a muscle or muscle group. Muscle endurance is the capacity of a muscle to exert force to maintain a fixed contraction for a period of time. Muscle tone refers to the firmness of a muscle. There are many different methods available to improve muscular strength, endurance, and tone. There are several muscular strengthening methods such as: weight machines, free weights, tubing/bands, and calisthenics (such as push-ups, triceps dips, and abdominal crunches). Once a person has developed their method of training, it is best to determine the level of strength. This will determine the frequency of training and the number of repetitions/set that will be done. After you select a level, you will notice that within each is a strength component, an aerobic component and a flexibility component. In order to see results, you must do some type of aerobic activity to decrease body fat and you should also stretch the muscles before and after strength training (not only will this decrease your chance of injuring the muscle, but it will help the more serious body builder lift more weight!). The benefits to strength training are: reshaping the body, increasing metabolism, strengthening bones, and improving posture. Women tend to have a fear of becoming too muscular if they weight lift or participate in strength training. There are 3 types of body types: mesomorph (more muscular type), ectomorph (slim and linear), and endomorph (more rounded, hour glass). Mesomorphs have a tendency to become bigger as a result of strength training; the other two body types tend to become stronger without bigger muscles. To avoid becoming bulky as a result of lifting weights, it is recommended to lower the amount of weight that is being lifted and increase the repetitions.

Here are eight myths about women

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Exercise Essentials

Do you want to feel less stressed? Less tired? More in control of your weight and appearance? More healthy? Believe it or not, there is one thing that can help you do all of this, and it doesn’t come in a bottle. It’s regular physical activity.

The more you move your body, the healthier you will be. That movement can come from everyday activities like working around the yard or house, walking up stairs, or playing with a child. Physical activity gets your body working in the way it was designed to work.

We often think of people as "in shape" or "out of shape," sedentary or active, fit or not fit. But the question "are you fit?" cannot be answered with "yes" or "no." Everyone has some level of fitness. Many people could feel better and be healthier if they increased that level of fitness even just a little. Doing so also helps protect against many long-term (chronic) diseases.

A sedentary (inactive) lifestyle is one of the top risk factors for heart disease. Fortunately, it’s a risk factor you can do something about. Regular exercise, especially aerobic exercise, has many benefits. It can:

- Strengthen your heart and cardiovascular system.
- Improve your circulation and help your body use oxygen better.
- Improve heart failure symptoms.
- Increase energy levels so you can do more activities without becoming tired or short of breath.
- Increase endurance and lower blood pressure.
- Improve muscle tone, strength, balance, and joint flexibility.
- Help reduce body fat and help you reach a healthy weight.
- Help reduce stress, tension, anxiety, and depression.
- Boost self-image and self-esteem.
- Improve sleep to make you feel more relaxed and rested.
- Make you look fit and feel healthy.

In general, to achieve maximum benefits, you should gradually work up to an aerobic session lasting 20 to 30 minutes, at least three to four times a week. Exercising every other day will help you keep a regular exercise schedule.

How can you stick with it? There are a variety of ways to motivate you to continue with an exercise program that you enjoy.

- Have fun!
- Choose a program that fits your schedule.
- Find an exercise ‘buddy.”

Before beginning an exercise program, always check with your doctor first. Your doctor can help you find a program that matches your level of fitness and physical condition. If any symptoms are experienced such as weakness, dizziness, pressure or pain in your chest, neck, arm, jaw, or shoulder, stop exercising and call your doctor immediately.

Source:
www.bodytrends.com

Body Building for Muscle Strength, Tone, and Endurance

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and strength training:

1. A woman’s muscle will turn into fat once she stops training. Muscle does not turn into fat nor does fat turn into muscle. If a muscle is not used, atrophy will occur, that is the muscles will shrink.

2. Rigorous strength training will rid her of body fat. Strength training can firm and tone muscle but it cannot directly burn fat. Strength training can increase a woman’s metabolic rate which is the rate calories are used, therefore, it is likely more fat calories will be utilized.

3. Strength training increases a woman’s needs for vitamins. Vitamins are not a source of energy and do not contribute to a woman’s body structure. A woman who strength trains receives no benefit from taking an excessive dose of vitamins. A diet of a variety of healthful foods will ensure adequate vitamin intake.

4. Strength training is for young women. It’s never too late for a woman to improve her muscular fitness. Strength training can help extend a woman’s functional life span.

5. Strength training is expensive for women. Not true. A muscle doesn’t know the cost of a machine it’s using. Muscle responds to the stress being applied to it...a pair of dumbbells or barbell can be just as effective as an expensive machine.

Sources: http://www.write4you.com/Paul/Paulmyths.html
http://k2.kirtland.cc.mi.us/~balbachl/weight.htm
First off, let’s begin by giving a bit of background on calisthenics. This unique sport/exercise originated in Australia roughly in the earliest part of the 20th century. It was developed to keep city dwellers fit.

Calisthenics is known as doing push-ups, sit-ups, squat thrusts, however, no one ever calls this calisthenics anymore. This type of activity is much more different than the traditional aerobics or weight training that we are accustomed to. In fact, calisthenics is the stretching or pulling of various muscles in your body. This requires the strength of your body to help build muscle instead of relying upon weights at the gym.

Calisthenics include doing pull-ups. This requires the individual to use the strength from their body to make the pull-up work. Another type of calisthenics is push-ups. These exercises allow the individual to use their body weight to tone the muscle.1

Exercises like calisthenics are recommended for individuals who are older because it improves strength and flexibility. Stretching exercises, in general, are to be done safely and slowly. You should avoid jerky or sudden movement because it could lead to strains and injury. Calisthenics are usually performed during warm-up sessions before you begin your cardiovascular exercise.

Calisthenics have the following benefits:

- **Utility**: Improves endurance without repetitive motion that often leads to injury
- **Versatility**: Could be used as warm-up exercises or used sets.
- **Discipline**: Demand attention to detail.
- **Body Awareness**: Disciplined execution.2

Fortunately, in order to see some good toning you’ll have to do these exercises right. If performed incorrectly, the exercises may actually do more harm or even promote some injury. Those who are have arthritis or have some orthopedic problems should see a doctor before starting calisthenics.

And now for some exercises that are considered “Calisthenics” and some tips to make sure that you are performing theses exercises properly.

**Sit-ups (strengthens lower back and abdominals)**

- Lie on your back, place feet on the floor with knees bent.
- Place hands on the side of your neck, behind your ears.
- Slowly tuck your body until trunk is off the ground.
- Don’t perform with jerky movement (This places stress on the lower back).

**Leg Lifts (strengthens thighs and buttocks)**

- Lie on back with knees bent.
- Lift knees to chest, raising the hips off the floor.
- Don’t perform double leg lefts with knees straight (Causes lower back to hyper-extended).

**Toe-touches (strengthens hamstrings)**

- Sit on the floor with legs stretched out in front of you.
- Slowly and gently bend forward.
- Reach for your toes.
- Don’t reach for your toes from a standing position (this can injury your knees, and strain your back).

**Knee-bends (strengthens quadriceps)**

- Stand with feet flat on the floor.
- Bend knees until upper thigh is parallel to floor.
- Keep back straight and upright.
- Don’t lean in forward (causes stress in the lower back).

**Thigh lift (strengthens thighs, hip and buttocks)**3

- Lie back with left knee above left hip, knee bent 90 degrees.
- Straighten arms by sides, hands away from body for a wide base of support.
- Tilt pelvis up and raise hips.
- Keeping hips lifted and steady, open left thigh out to the side, then slowly bring knee back in above hip.

**Plié with Dégagé (Targets thighs, plus hips and buttocks)**3

*Start with...*

- Stand with feet facing front, wider than hips.
- Rock back on heels, lift toes, and rotate hips outward.
- Raise arms, slightly rounded, to shoulder height.
- Bend knees, lowering body into a plié. Don't go past 90 degrees; keep knees over heels.

*Then continue with...*

- Engaging abs and inner thighs, straighten legs while pulling right heel in to meet lift, squeezing thighs and glutes together.
- Keeping glutes tight, brush (dégagé) right foot off the floor; back out to wide second position.

**Back Up (Targets back muscles and external obliques)**3

- Lie facedown on ground, arms at sides, lower body relaxed.
- Arch back and lift head and chest off ground.
- Hold for one count, then release.

Continued on page 6...
There are many exercises out there that can help you tone your muscle and firm up areas that you feel are some trouble. Although one thing to keep in mind is that in order for muscle to show you have to burn off the fat that is lying on top of the muscle. By burning fat you’ll have to perform more cardiovascular exercise than strength training. It’s recommended that you do at least 20 minutes of cardio for a minimum of 3 days a week to start burning off the fat. The more you extend your cardiovascular workout the better and faster you’ll see results.

However, results are different for every person because people lose fat in different areas in their bodies. It’s important to keep in mind that you can’t lose fat from one particular area of your body but through gaining muscle through strength training, doing more cardiovascular exercise and watching what you eat, you’ll be on your way too much healthier, happier you in no time!

Sources:
1. “Healthy Living” Ohio Health www.healthyliving/mar02fitness.htm
3. Fitness Magazine. Find them online at www.fitnessmagazine.com/