

How Can You Stay Fit?

Introduction: In this lesson, students will learn about the health benefits of aerobic exercise, as well the importance of other types of physical activity such as stretching. This lesson is adapted from a lesson idea on the American Heart Association’s website at: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3003156>.

Grade Level and Subject: 3rd and 4th Grade Health Education, P.E.

TEKS: 3rd Grade: Health – 1A, 1B, 4B, 4C
P.E. – 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A, 4B,
4th Grade: Health – 1C, 1D, 2A, 2B
P.E. – 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A, 4B, 4C

Materials: “Fit for Fun” article; What’s Your Activity I.Q.? activity sheet

Activity:

1. Read aloud or have volunteers read the article, “Fit for Fun.” *What is aerobic exercise?* (continuous exercise that makes the heart and lungs work harder) *How much aerobic exercise do we need to do to help our hearts get stronger?* (We need to get at least a total of 30 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous activity on most, if not all, days of the week.) *How can we get aerobic exercise?* Emphasize that both organized activities (some team sports, dance classes) and more casual activities (bicycling and playing actively outdoors) are healthy aerobic activities.
2. *What should you try to do before you do a vigorous physical activity?* (warm up) Explain that a person “warms up” by doing light to moderate activities, such as jogging in place, walking at a moderate rate, or doing jumping jacks, to help prepare the body for more vigorous activity. Before students play outside at recess or participate in a physical activity in gym class, ask a volunteer to lead the class in warm-up activities.

What should you try to do after you do a vigorous physical activity? (cool down and stretch) Explain that “cooling down” means gradually slowing down the physical activity. *Why is stretching important?* (It makes you more flexible and helps keep you from getting sore muscles.) After students return from recess or gym class, ask a volunteer to lead the class in a series of stretches. Point out that stretching should be done gently, without bouncing, and that stretching by itself is a good activity for relieving tension and stiffness.
3. If possible, take students outdoors or into a gymnasium where they can run approximately 100 meters. (Note: Any students who cannot participate in the activity can act as recorders.) Have students take a one-minute pulse, run the designated distance, and immediately take their pulse again. *Did you make your heart work harder when you ran?* (yes) *How can you tell?* Students should recognize that their heart rate, indicated by their pulse rate, went up and that their breathing became deeper and more rapid.

What happens after you rest for a few minutes? (heart rate and breathing rate return to their resting rates.) You just ran 100 meters. Does this physical activity give your heart the best workout? (No, not unless it is part of activities that add up to a minimum of 30 minutes for the day.)

4. Distribute large sheets of drawing paper. Tell students to use the left side of the paper to create a picture and caption showing themselves participating in their favorite *non-active* leisure activity, such as reading, watching television, or playing video or board games. Have them use the right side of the paper to create a picture and caption showing themselves participating in their favorite *active* leisure activity. Point out that this may be an organized activity, such as a dance class or a team sport, or playing active games with their friends.

Encourage students to display and discuss their drawings. Point out that a balance of both kinds of activities is ideal. *Have you ever had to stay inside and play quietly for a long time on a rainy day? How did you feel?* Encourage discussion about feeling restless when one doesn't get enough physical activity.

5. Have students complete the "What's Your Activity IQ?" activity sheet by circling the letter of each correct answer. Have students discuss their answers as a class or in small groups. Ask students to rate their own Activity I.Q.

Evaluation: Observe students for participation in the discussion activities. Check that each student completes his or her "What's Your Activity IQ?" sheet.



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What's Your Activity I.Q.?

See how much you know about participating in physical activity for a healthy heart. Circle the letter next to each correct answer.

- 1** Which of the following is an aerobic activity?
 - a. bicycling**
 - b. fishing**
 - c. racing your sister to the telephone**

- 2** How much total time in a day do you need to participate in an aerobic activity to keep your heart healthy?
 - a. at least 5 minutes**
 - b. at least 30 minutes**
 - c. at least 2 hours**

- 3** How many times each week should you do an aerobic activity to have a healthy heart?
 - a. at least 7**
 - b. at least 1**
 - c. at least 4**

- 4** Before you do a physical activity, you should
 - a. take your pulse.**
 - b. warm up.**
 - c. blow your nose.**

- 5** Physical activity does which of the following?
 - a. improves your breathing**
 - b. makes the blood rush to your head**
 - c. makes your hair grow faster**

- 6** A good activity for strengthening your leg muscles is
 - a. push-ups.**
 - b. curl-ups.**
 - c. climbing.**

- 7** Which is the best reason for choosing a physical activity?
 - a. All your friends do it.**
 - b. You enjoy doing it.**
 - c. You might become a professional and make a lot of money doing it.**

- 8** Which of these household chores is also an aerobic activity?
 - a. cleaning your room**
 - b. washing the dishes**
 - c. mowing the lawn**

FIT **FOR** FUN

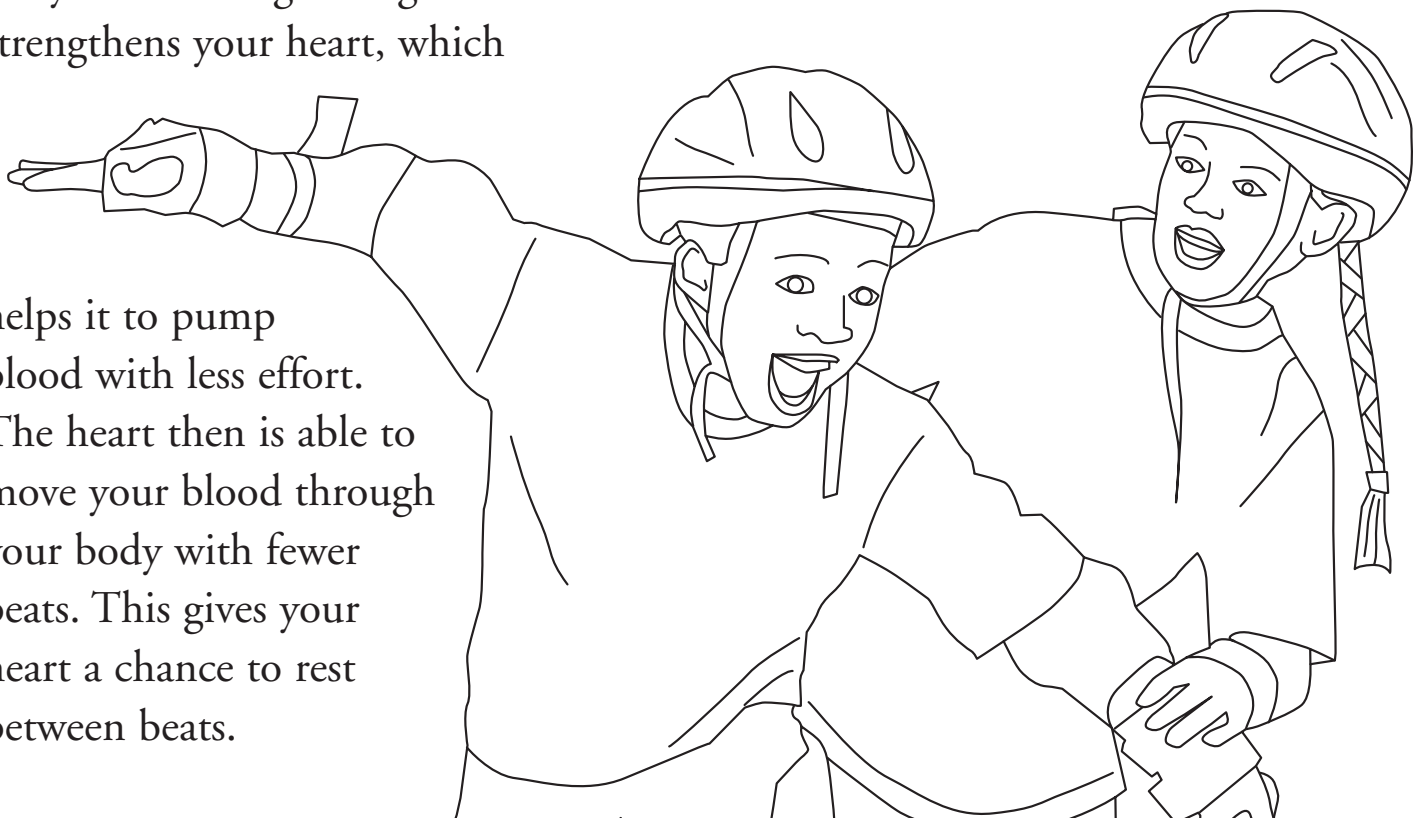
Are you an after-school, glued-to-the-tube-type dude? If this doesn't describe you, it probably describes someone you know. Let's look into the future of these couch potato people. You certainly won't see them on TV as the next great athlete. Of course, not everyone grows up to be a world-famous athlete. Even if you don't earn the big bucks for being fit, there are still rewards for exercising.

PUT YOUR HEART INTO IT

Physical fitness helps your body to be strong. Being fit also strengthens your heart, which

helps it to pump blood with less effort. The heart then is able to move your blood through your body with fewer beats. This gives your heart a chance to rest between beats.

Sometimes your heart beats faster, like when you run or jump rope. That's because your muscles are using oxygen. So what does that have to do with your heart? Well, your heart pumps blood. Blood is what carries oxygen to your muscles. Oxygen is used to help your muscles contract. After you stop exercising, your muscles don't need so much oxygen, and your heart slows down to normal. This is called your resting heart rate. The faster your heart returns to normal, the better it is for your heart. The more you exercise, the



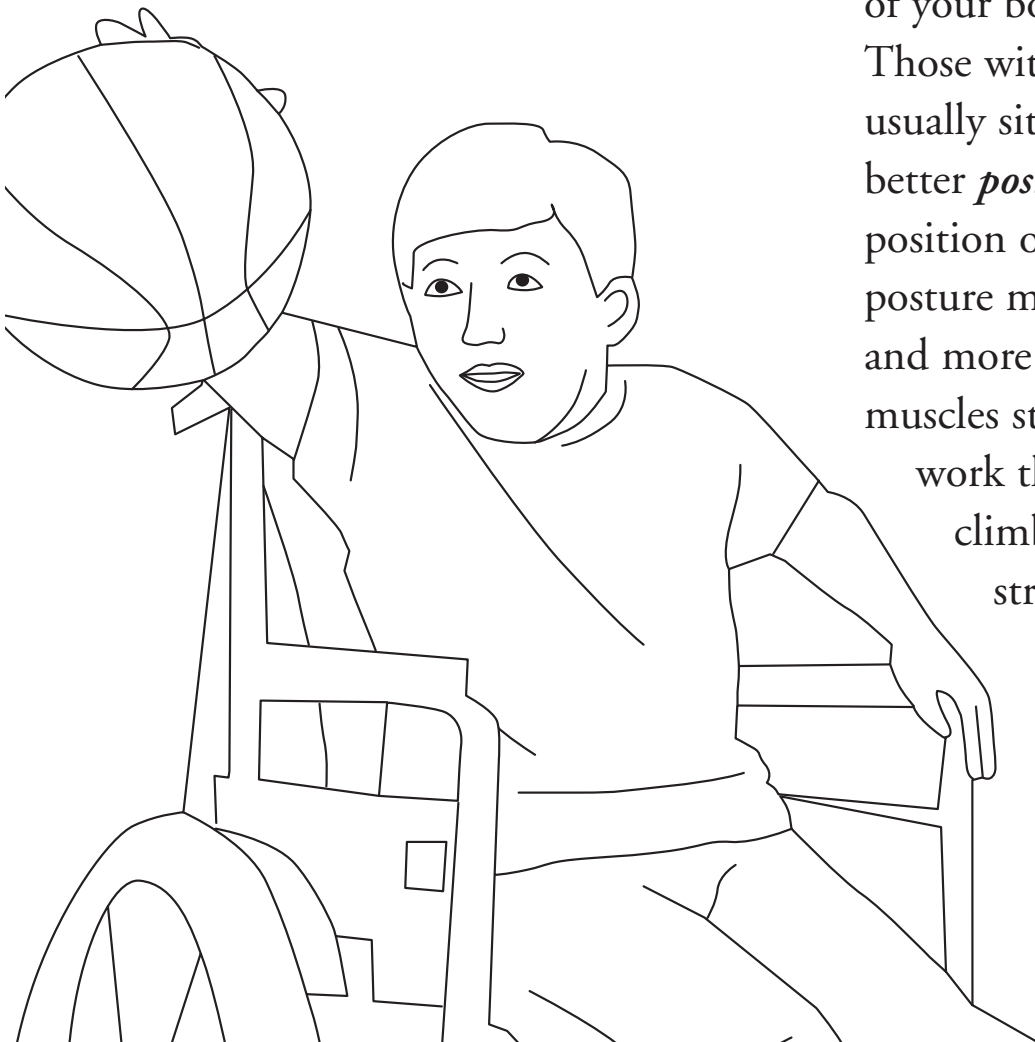
quicker your heart rate will return to its resting rate.

To really help your heart get stronger, you need at least 30 minutes of *aerobic* (ə r o' bik; exercise that conditions the heart and lungs) exercise three to four times a week. This means that you need to get your heart beating faster than normal and keep it beating faster for at least 30 minutes. So, how do you do that? You start by getting off the couch and moving. Any kind of moving will help. You can in-line skate,

jog, hike, bike, or swim. Get a friend to get fit with you. How about joining a soccer team, or basketball? You can sign up for a dance class, gymnastics, tennis, or track. You can do something as simple as mowing your lawn or taking your dog for a brisk walk. He needs exercise, too!

WORK THOSE MUSCLES

Taking care of your heart is a great reason to exercise, but there are other good reasons, too. Keeping fit improves the strength of your bones, muscles, and joints. Those with stronger muscles usually sit, stand, and walk with better *posture* (pos'chər; the position of the body). Good posture makes you look healthier and more attractive. To make your muscles stronger, you need to work them. For instance, climbing and bicycling strengthen your leg muscles. Pull-ups and push-ups help to strengthen your arms, and sit-ups help to strengthen your stomach muscles.



IT FEELS GOOD

So you still have to sit in front of the TV for your favorite show? Why not spend that time stretching your muscles? Stretching helps you to be more *flexible* (flek'sə bəl; able to bend without breaking). Stretch your arms, legs, back, stomach, and neck. Do it slowly, without jerking. It is good for your muscles, and helps you to relax.

Get your whole family to join in and have a family fitness stretch and strengthen night. Do some sit-ups together. Do some easy

exercises together, like marching in place. Take turns being the exercise leader. What's important is that you aren't just sitting there. And remember: Always warm up before and after exercising.

Now that you know why you need to be fit and how to be fit, go find a friend to get fit with. Remember these steps to fitness: warm-up, aerobics, muscle strengthening, flexibility, and stretching. So, make a deal with your friend to turn off the tube, and get energized with exercise.

