



What does it mean to be healthy? And fit? Does it mean that if you can walk or run for one hour or you have a low body fat percentage, that you are a healthy person? **NALISHA PATEL** investigates.

The difference between *fit and healthy*

Many people choose to focus on the aesthetic side of fitness, and in the process miss out on the complete picture of what healthy living and a sense of real well-being entails. Fitness is defined as the physical ability to perform athletic activity.

Health is defined as the state in which all the systems of the body-nervous, muscular, circulatory, digestive, skeletal, lymphatic and hormonal to name a few, are working optimally.

The focus these days tends to be on losing weight and looking good. Therefore, how does one know if they are really healthy?

Do you work out with weights three times a week to enhance your metabolism and bone health? Do you do yoga or pilates three times a week to increase your flexibility and

balance? Do you brush your teeth every day and night to protect against gum disease?

Do you actively aim to relax for an hour a day without outside stimulation (ie TV)? Do you eat optimally for your age and health profile?

These are the sorts of questions we need to ask ourselves if we are to progress to optimal health. Our goal in life should not be to become just fit, but healthy also. The aim of this article is to inform you of factors to consider for a healthy lifestyle.

Many trainers in the gym and articles in some publications focus on losing weight and looking slim. Programmes such as "Core secrets" are focusing on the anaerobic component of fitness, which include using weights and the Swissball. People need to realize that aerobic fitness is a vitally important component of health and needs to be addressed more in-depth.

People need to be more educated on what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. There is a difference between aerobic and anaerobic exercise (cardio and weights).

Aerobic literally means "with oxygen" and refers to moderate to low intensity exercise, sustained over a period of time. The aerobic system when trained is what gives you your endurance to say, climb a flight of stairs. The aerobic system includes the heart, lungs, blood vessels, and aerobic muscles. If you work your system out aerobically and work your metabolism and eat a proper diet and exercise – you will burn fat as your primary source of fuel, as well as potentially protect your body from diseases.

Anaerobic, on the other hand, means "without oxygen". This is referring to exercise that is done in short bursts of power or energy. This is like weight training with weights and a swissball. Anaerobic exercise burns glycogen as its primary source of fuel and therefore encourages the body to store fat. Anaerobic exercise is needed for bone density health and to increase muscle mass to increase metabolism.

To determine whether you are working out aerobically or anaerobically, the heart is the optimal factor in which to determine which of the two you are working out at.

Low levels of activity such as walking, biking and dancing at a moderate level of intensity, are considered aerobic exercise as they should not tax the heart too much.

With weight training, which is anaerobic exercise, you are required to work out at a more intense level which can leave you breathless.

The aim should be for a healthy lifestyle rather than just to be working out for physical fitness. To get the best results optimally, you want to be working out at a moderate intensity level, based on 75 per cent of your maximum heart rate, for a longer period of time rather than an intense jog or walk that leaves you puffed.

First calculate your maximum heart rate.

The formula to calculate 75 per cent of your maximum heart rate:

$$(208) - (0.7 \diamond \text{AGE}) = \text{Maximum heart rate.}$$

Now calculate 75 per cent of your maximum heart rate:

$$\text{Maximum heart rate} / 100 \diamond 75$$

Example: For a 25 year old women, 75 per cent of her maximum heart rate would be:

$$(208) - (0.7 \diamond 25) = 190.5$$

$$190.5 / 100 \diamond 75 = 142 \text{ beats per minute.}$$

Now, while you are exercising aerobically (walking, jogging, bicycling and the like), measure your beats per minutes by taking your pulse at the wrist. Count for 10 seconds and times by six to get beats per minute. Adjust the intensity of your activity so that your beats per minute are the same as your calculated one.

You will find that you will not get tired from working out at this intensity. You will feel energized, invigorated and not tired after completing your workout! This will lead you on the path to true health. Aim to do aerobic exercise for 20 minutes for beginners and 45 minutes for optimal health as you progress. Walk every day or five to six days a week and you will start to feel the positive changes. Avoid the "no pain, no gain" attitude!

Aerobic exercise completed in this manner has been said to reduce your incidence of heart disease, obesity, diabetes and various other illnesses and diseases.

At your gym or with a personal trainer, make sure that before they begin you on a weight loss programme that they know where you are in terms of a health risk profile. Allow for a realistic timeframe in which to get the results you desire.

Cardio (aerobic exercise) can often be overlooked in a gym environment, as clients predominantly work out on the weight machines (anaerobic exercise).

If you have high blood pressure or have high cholesterol, your trainer should modify your programmes to include aerobic exercise to decrease both these elements. An inexperienced trainer will generally focus you on weights and a small portion of your workout on a cardio machine or walking plan.

Health needs to be looked at from a holistic point of view. A person should not be considered healthy if they have a low body fat percentage and are slim and "fit", but have gum disease or do not drink enough water. People need to view their healthy lifestyle as encompassing healthy and optimal eating, the "right" type of exercise (aerobic and anaerobic), stress management, mind, spirit and looking after their oral, sight and general health.

Focus on health first and aesthetics second. Lay a solid foundation now, as prevention is ultimately our best cure.

▲ *Nalisha Patel is the founder of HealthMastery, women's mobile fitness specialists, 12-week challenges, personal training and personalised programmes. Email: healthmastery@xtra.co.nz*