

Include Aerobic Fitness in Physical Exams, Heart Association Recommends



By Erik Lief — December 2, 2016



The importance of aerobic health [1]

Right now it's a recommendation, but what a very smart one it is.

Hats off to the American Heart Association for raising the visibility and importance of aerobic fitness, and declaring that the metric be considered a vital sign which should be monitored and measured in physical checkups administered by physicians.

The scientific statement makes it clear that exercising the heart and lungs is essential to an individual's overall health, and that those prone to inactivity are at greater risk for life-threatening conditions.

"Mounting evidence has firmly established that low levels of cardiorespiratory fitness (CRF) are associated with a high risk of cardiovascular disease, all-cause mortality, and mortality rates attributable to various cancers," [states the AHA in its online posting](#) [2]. "The underlying premise of this statement is that the addition of CRF for risk classification presents health professionals with unique opportunities to improve patient management and to encourage lifestyle-based strategies designed to reduce cardiovascular risk."

The new statement is a significant indicator that exercise, movement and physical activity are all essential to overall health, while making the topic more prominent for doctor-patient interactions.

Moreover, the [National Stroke Association](#) [3] agrees with the recommendation and supports the AHA's conclusion, which underwent peer review. On its site, CRF is described as "the body's ability to transport oxygen during sustained physical activity. Physical activity is a behavior that can potentially improve CRF."

Traditionally, blood pressure, pulse, body temperature and breathing rates have been the primary measurements in physical examinations.

Aerobic fitness levels were being considered for recommendation just a few years ago, but at the time treadmill tests were considered costly, as well as difficult for doctors to administer during checkups. But with improved technology, including online calculators that determine a person's "fitness age," the AHA believed the time was right to endorse the practice of including aerobic measurements in physicals. And we agree.

If you're interested in evaluating your own aerobic capabilities, to see where you stand, [visit this site](#) [4], or [this one](#) [5].

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[2] <http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/early/2016/11/21/CIR.0000000000000461>

[3] https://professional.heart.org/professional/ScienceNews/UCM_490293_Importance-of-Assessing-Cardiorespiratory-Fitness-in-Clinical-Practice.jsp

[4] <https://www.worldfitnesslevel.org/#/>

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