Extension Folder 339

PHYSICAL FITNESS FOR YOU

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WHAT IT CAN MEAN TO YOU

Physical fitness is the measure of your body's strength, endurance, activeness, and coordination. In personal terms, it relates to how you feel – mentally, as well as physically. It is your ability to face each new day with vigor and pleasure, to work without undue fatigue, with energy left to enjoy hobbies, recreation, your family, or to meet unexpected emergencies.

Physical fitness is the total of many things: proper nutrition, adequate rest and relaxation, good health practices, proper medical and dental care, and physical activity, known as **exercise**!

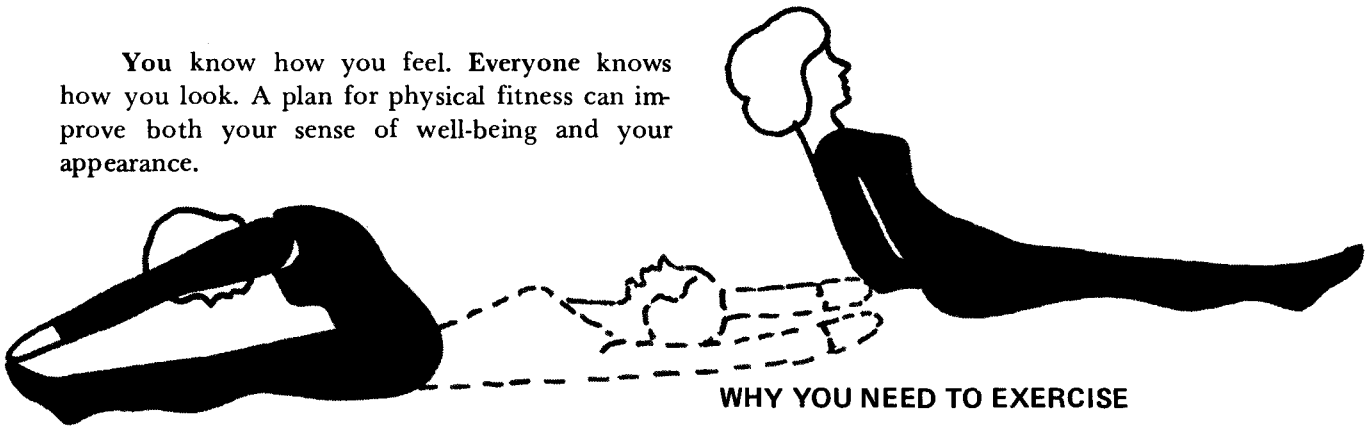
Each person can add her own ideas of what physical fitness means to her!

You sleep better, think better, digest better, enjoy life more, and feel better when you are "in shape." You look better when you are fit, and you gain confidence from the satisfaction of knowing that you look your best.

You can stand much more activity without fatigue than the unfit person. You will be better equipped to tolerate physical stress.

As a physically-fit person, you will have a stronger and more efficient heart. Physical fitness even affects your mental alertness and is responsible for the absence of nervous tension.

You know how you feel. Everyone knows how you look. A plan for physical fitness can improve both your sense of well-being and your appearance.



WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT FITNESS

If you have decided that it is time to get in shape, you have a rewarding adventure ahead. Through a planned program, you will know exactly how and where to begin, and what to do every step of the way.

Take It Easy!

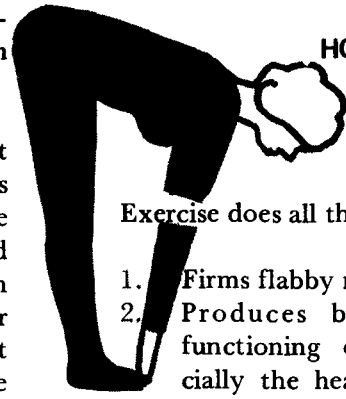
You should begin easily, without straining or upsetting yourself, no matter how long it has been since you have engaged in vigorous physical activity. You can exercise at home without any special equipment, and at a time convenient to you. The time required will not be excessive. In fact, your exercises can be worked in with your everyday duties, and you will never miss the time. But, to make exercising a habit in your life, **it is recommended that you set aside a particular time each day.**

Physical fitness can be achieved at any age. It is not, however, achieved overnight, and it does take effort. After you get started, you will notice (possibly for the first time since your pink-cheeked youth) the pure fun, relaxation, and exhilaration that you earn after each and every workout. Your spirits will improve, your walk will become a bit more springy, your clothes will become a little looser around the tight areas, and your friends will want to be in on your new-found secret. You won't need will power after you get started. Will power is only needed for unpleasant jobs, and acquiring physical fitness will certainly not be unpleasant for you. Instead, it can become as enjoyable to you as your attitude will allow it to be.

WHY YOU NEED TO EXERCISE

Your body is more than half muscle. These muscles require exercise to keep your body in top shape. Muscles make every motion possible. When you use your muscles too little, your body becomes "flabby." This means not only having flabby muscles, but a weakened heart, blood vessels, blood, and respiratory system, to name only a few things that would be affected. A flabby or deteriorated state, created by little activity, brings about a greater inability for activity. This leads to even further restriction on your activity, and you begin to act sick, or to age prematurely. You then avoid the physical exertion which used to be fun, but now causes only pains and aches, and makes you puff and feel tired.

Start exercising today. Do it gradually, and soon you will begin to look and feel your best!



HOW EXERCISE BENEFITS YOUR BODY

Exercise does all this for you:

1. Firms flabby muscles.
2. Produces beneficial changes in the functioning of internal organs (especially the heart, lungs, and circulatory system).
3. Increases joint flexibility.
4. Reduces minor aches, pains, stiffness, and soreness.
5. Aids weight control.
6. Corrects curable postural defects.
7. Improves general appearance.

8. Improves ability to relax and to voluntarily reduce tension.
9. Increases strength, endurance, and coordination.
10. Reduces chronic fatigue.

Medical and health authorities also maintain that the best way to take off excess weight, and keep it off, is by proper exercise combined with a proper diet.

"The best insurance against coronary (heart) disease is exercise—lots of it," said a noted heart specialist. Appropriate exercise does strengthen the heart. Caution should, however, be taken by those who have not exercised regularly before, and by older people who might have some undetected heart condition.

EVERYDAY TIPS FOR FITNESS

There are a number of things you can do in the course of your day's work at home or at the office to help keep your muscles in tone. At home or at work, pull in your abdomen (but keep breathing normally) whenever the phone rings. At work, put the phone at a distance where you have to reach out and really stretch your arm to pick it up each time. In fact, stretch whenever you can. Stop once in a while and stretch each arm and leg, stretch your neck and back muscles. At your desk, let yourself go completely limp once in a while after gripping the desk or chair tightly first for a few seconds.

When you sit down in a chair, do it with knee action instead of just flopping into it. When you get up, don't push or pull yourself up with your hands. Instead, place your feet under you and raise yourself by pushing them against the floor.

Do your sweeping and dusting with brisk movements. Keep a straight back when you are scrubbing, lifting, or picking up things. Keep your back and arms straight while you do your ironing. Move vigorously about the house, backyard and office.

Walk, Cycle, Jump

Walk whenever you can. Instead of taking the car or bus for a mile or two, can you spare that extra time to walk the distance? Instead of taking an elevator all the way up or down, can you get off and walk one or two flights of stairs? Look around and you'll find opportunities every day for doing some extra walking -- one of the best and easiest of exercises.

Borrow your youngster's bike and begin riding it short distances until you get the hang of it again and can work up to longer excursions.

We know a woman who takes a jumprope to the office with her and jumps rope 100 times a day. She started with 10 jumps and added 10 more every few days until she reached 100. She keeps another jumprope at home for the weekends and the days she misses at work, and she credits it with helping to keep her back and leg muscles in shape.

Maybe you just don't like the idea of doing exercises every day. Maybe you'd much rather rely on long walks and hikes, on swimming, horseback riding, jogging, or playing tennis. These all come under the heading of "circulatory exercises," and if you can do several of them on a regular basis, they'll go a long way towards keeping you fit. But if you are not already in good physical condition, it's still best to start with the warmup and conditioning exercises, and then graduate into these more enjoyable activities.

YOUR PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAM

Before you begin, get a check-up. A medical examination is advisable at least once a year for an adult. It is a good idea to get such an examination before beginning your conditioning program. Also, analyze your body and figure before you begin, taking account of your good points. Then set your goals to improve your weak points. It is best to set a few simple goals at the beginning. Set goals that can be accomplished in a few weeks, or you may go stale and lose interest. Much can be accomplished through a good diet, plus exercise!

There are three types of exercises that you will use as you begin to go from one level to another. On the first level is the warmup exercise.

Warm-up exercises stretch and limber up the muscles and speed up the action of the heart and

lungs, preparing the body for greater exertion and reducing the possibility of unnecessary strain.

Conditioning exercises tone up abdominal, back, leg, arm, and other major muscles. Your appearance will improve as muscles in the arms and legs become more responsive. Every move you make is likely to be easier and more graceful.

Circulatory activities produce contractions of large muscle groups for longer periods than the conditioning exercises. This stimulates the circulatory and respiratory systems.

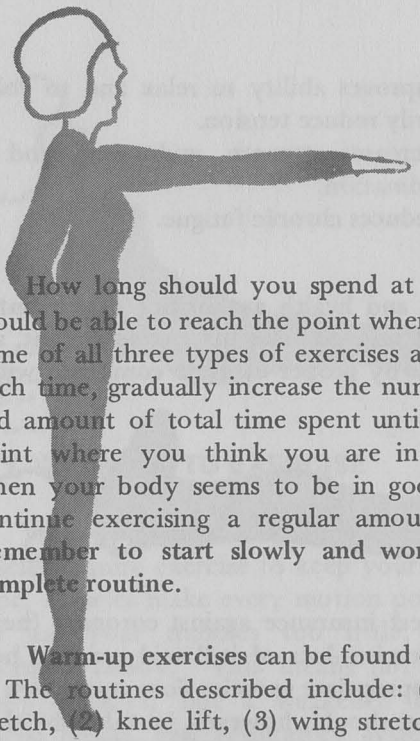
You will become oriented to your physical fitness program through various warmup exercises. After you have completely limbered up the muscles of your body, you will be ready for the conditioning exercises. When your body is adjusted to the conditioning exercises, you should be able to do exercises from the circulatory group. When you have mastered the three types of exercises just mentioned, you should continue to use some from each level to have a complete program.

Make progress on your own scale. You should determine your own level of ability to perform the required exercises without undue discomfort or fatigue.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Set Up a Daily Routine

Where and how often should you exercise? Exercising should become part of your daily routine. Choose a time that is convenient. It is best to exercise at a regular time each day. Testing for improvement (measurement and weight) should be done at the same time and under the same conditions each time. If you are looking for improvement in your figure, don't test more than once a week.



How long should you spend at a time? You should be able to reach the point where you can do some of all three types of exercises at one session. Each time, gradually increase the number of times and amount of total time spent until you reach a point where you think you are in good shape. When your body seems to be in good condition, continue exercising a regular amount each day. **Remember to start slowly and work up to the complete routine.**

Warm-up exercises can be found on pages 5, 6, 7. The routines described include: (1) bend and stretch, (2) knee lift, (3) wing stretcher, (4) half-knee bend, (5) waist whittler, and (6) arm circles.

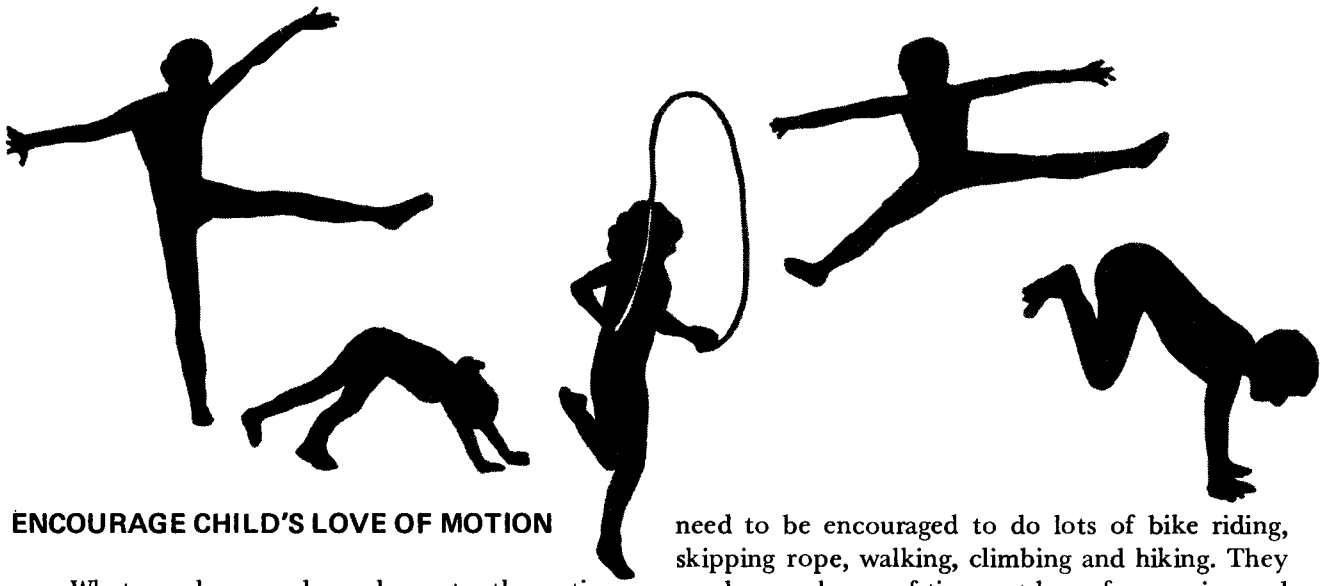
Conditioning exercises can be found on pages 8 and 9. The following exercises are described there: (1) knee pushups, (2) head and shoulder curl (chest and tummy), (3) airplane hiproll (side hip and thigh), (4) sit-ups (tummy), (5) Derriere diminisher (buttocks).

Circulatory exercises include: (1) skip rope, (2) walking, (3) running in place, (4) the jog-walk (walk, then run, and repeat), and (5) swimming.

Enjoy Yourself

After you have begun these exercises, enjoy yourself! This is a "fun" activity. Make up your mind to lead a more active life if you expect to feel and look better. If you continue leading an inactive life, you can expect the results of this inactivity.

Some of you will begin and then will lose interest soon. You must remember that it is not your body giving up, but your mind and determination. As you begin to lose interest, read again the points we have made about the physical fitness program.



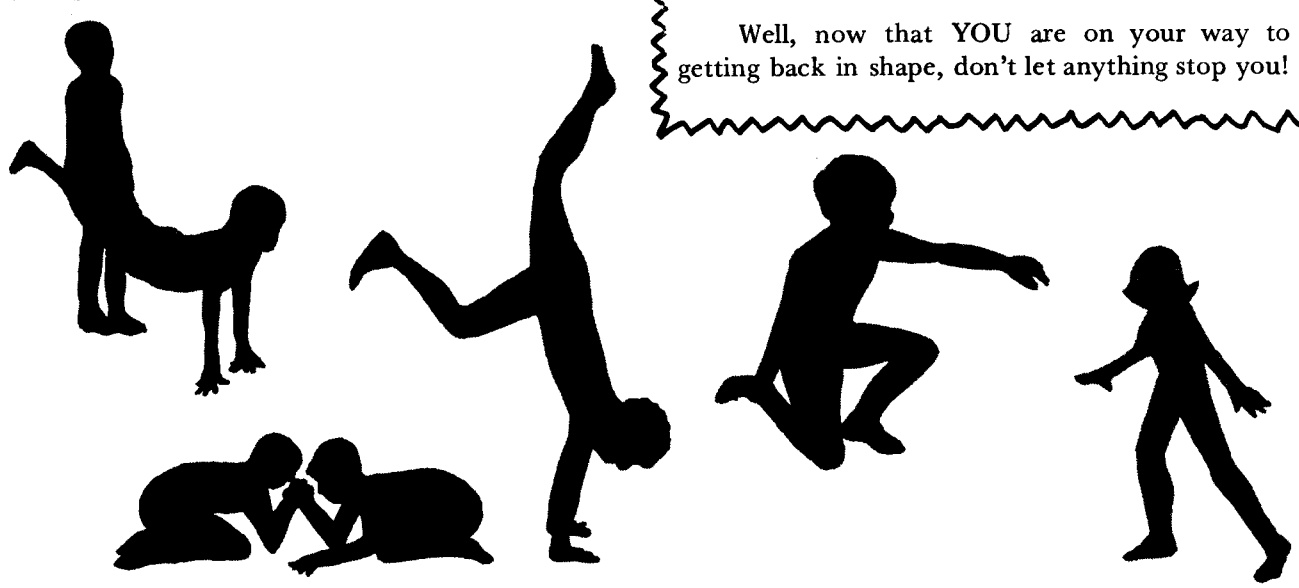
ENCOURAGE CHILD'S LOVE OF MOTION

Whatever happened, anyhow, to the active, fit, energetic youngster you used to be? And what can you do to keep your own children and grandchildren from settling into a flabby, slowed-down adulthood?

Dr. Elsie C. Burton, of the University of Kentucky's Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, is disturbed that so many children soon lose their inherent joy of movement. She thinks they have too many of their adventures in front of a TV set, or in classrooms where they just sit and sit. In most schools, organized sports include only the children best endowed physically or with a competitive spirit. The others are forced into the spectator role, and no physical education class can make up for the hours they spend glued to desks and bleachers. Dr. Burton thinks children need to be encouraged to do lots of bike riding, skipping rope, walking, climbing and hiking. They need many hours of time outdoors for running and jumping games and free play.

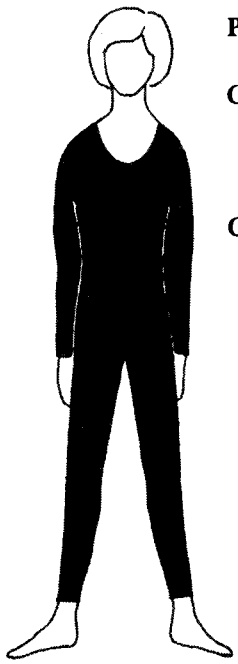
A very young child should be allowed and encouraged to sit up and stand or walk as soon as he wants to try. When he's ready to jump, swing, and climb, he should be provided with safe places to develop his courage, his self confidence and physical skills by climbing and jumping and swinging all he wants. Dr. Burton feels that parents and grandparents can do much to encourage children in all sorts of creative, spontaneous physical activities. With your help, they may never have to go through the experience of getting "soft" and having to set up an exercise regime to get themselves back in shape again.

Well, now that YOU are on your way to getting back in shape, don't let anything stop you!



WARM-UP ROUTINES

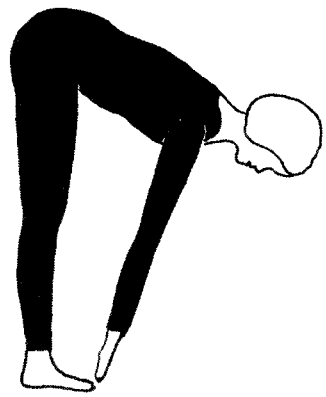
BEND and STRETCH
(whittles the waistline)

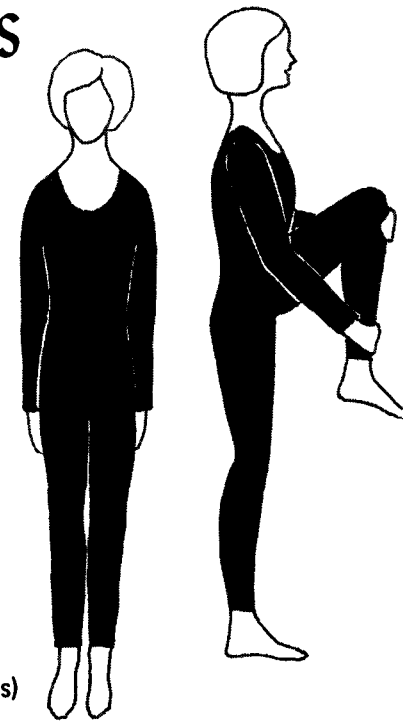


Position: Stand erect, with feet a shoulder's width apart.

Count 1: Bend trunk forward and down, flexing your knees. Stretch gently in an attempt to touch your fingers to your toes or to the floor.

Count 2: Return to starting position.





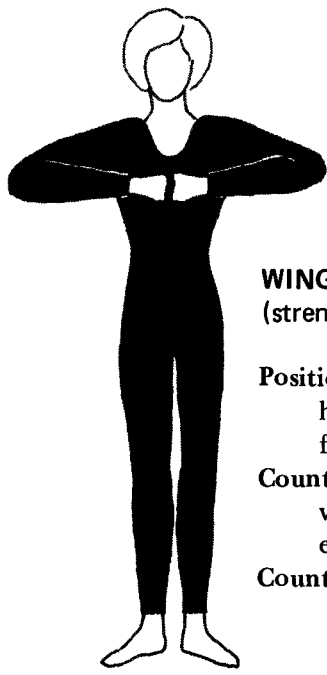
KNEE LIFT
(strengthens leg muscles)

Position: Stand erect—feet together, arms at sides.

Count 1: Raise your left knee as high as possible, grasping your leg with your hands and pulling your knee against the body while keeping a straight back.

Count 2: Lower the left leg to starting position.

Counts 3 and 4: Repeat with right knee.

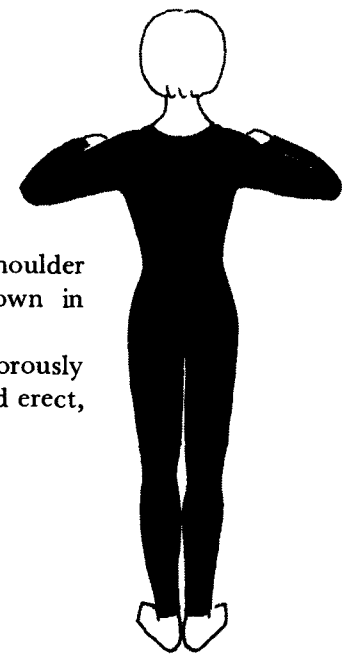


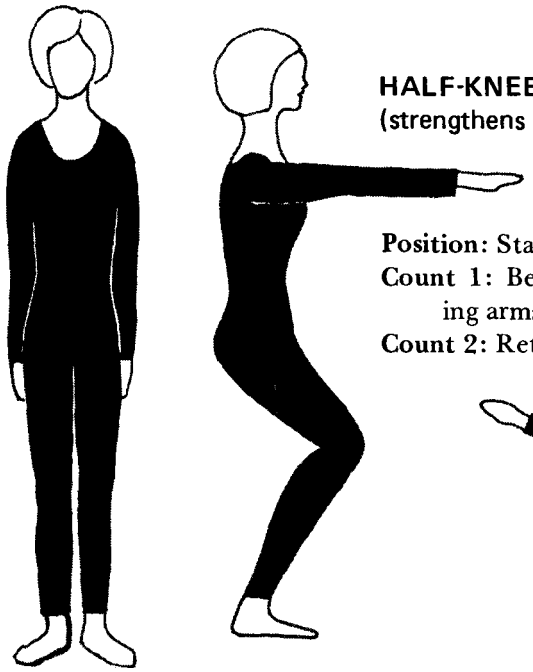
WING STRETCHER
(strengthens arm and back muscles)

Position: Stand erect, raise elbows to shoulder height, fists clenched, palms down in front of chest.

Count 1: Thrust elbows backward vigorously without arching back. Keep head erect, elbows at shoulder height.

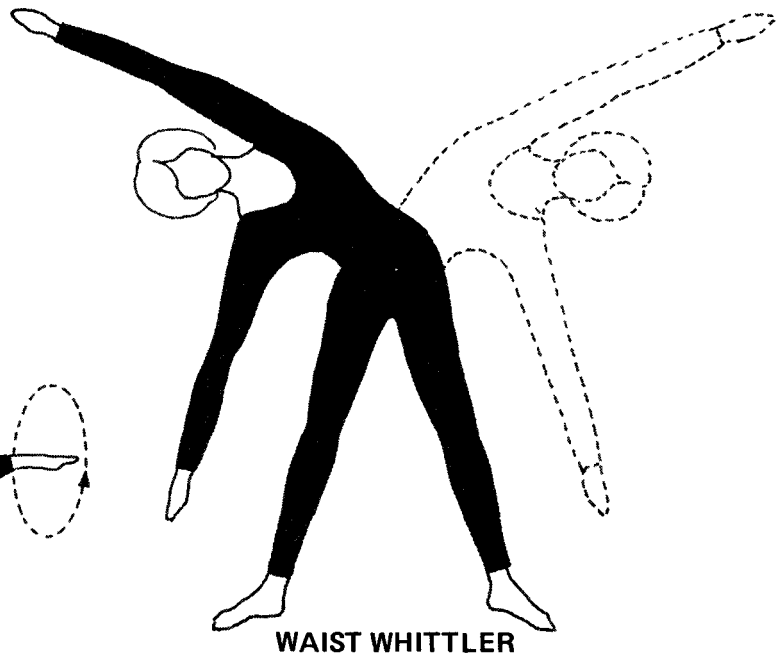
Count 2: Return to starting position.





HALF-KNEE BEND
(strengthens leg muscles)

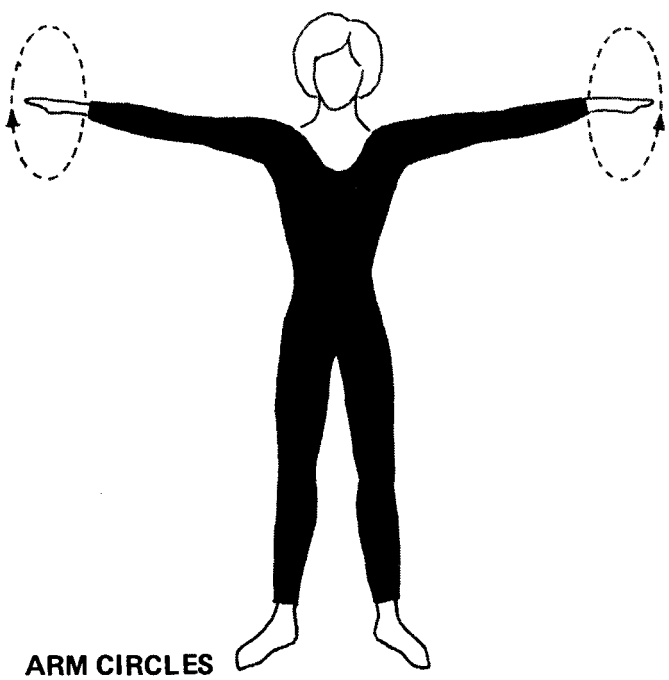
Position: Stand erect, with hands on hips.
Count 1: Bend knees halfway, while extending arms forward, palms down.
Count 2: Return to starting position.



WAIST WHITTLER

Position: Stand with legs about 2 feet apart, arms spread wide above head.
Count 1: Bend to the right side until right hand touches floor near right foot.
Count 2: Raise body and arms until standing straight again.
Count 3: Bend to the left side until left hand touches floor near left foot.
Count 4: Same as Count 2.

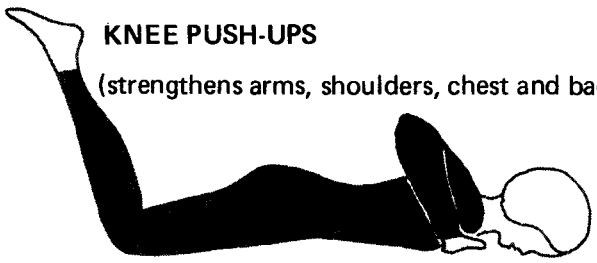
Repeat 10 times on each side.



ARM CIRCLES
(firms upper arm and bust)

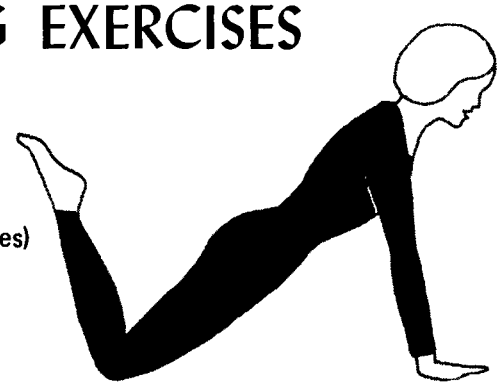
Position: Stand with feet about 4 inches apart and hands outstretched.
Count: Rotate hands in circles, first clockwise and then counterclockwise.

CONDITIONING EXERCISES



KNEE PUSH-UPS

(strengthens arms, shoulders, chest and back muscles)



Position: Lie on floor, face down, legs together; knees bent with feet raised off the floor, hands on floor under shoulders, palms down.

Count 1: Push upper body off floor until arms are fully extended and body is in straight line from head to knees.

Count 2: Return to starting position.

HEAD and SHOULDER CURL

(tightens abdominal muscles)

Position: Lie on back, hands tucked under small of back, palms down.

Count 1: Tighten abdominal muscles, lift head, and pull shoulders and elbows off floor. Hold for four seconds.

Count 2: Return to starting position.

SIT-UPS

(strengthens abdominal and front thigh muscles)

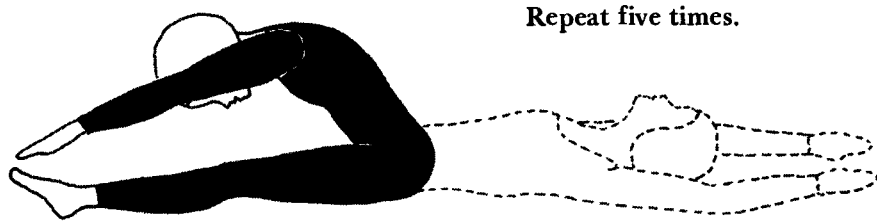
Position: Lie on back, hands above head.

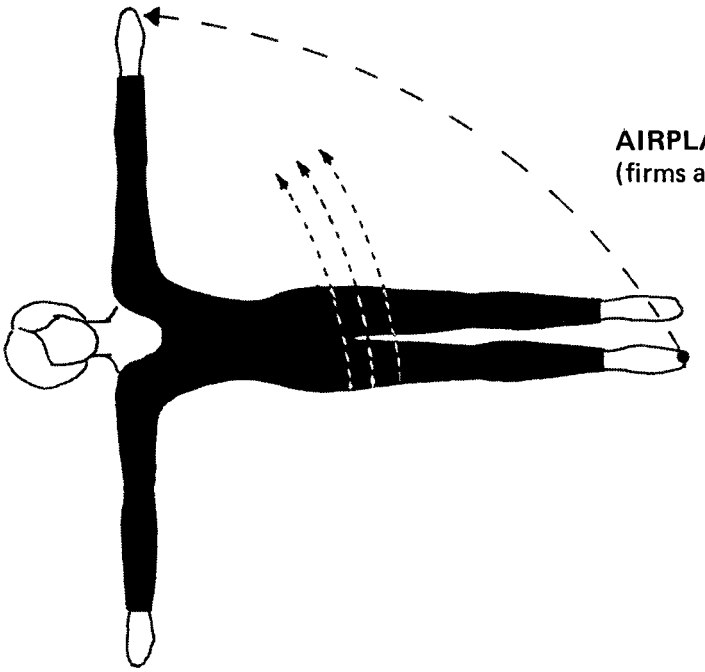
Count 1: Raise upper body to sitting position.

Count 2: Lean forward and touch toes with fingers.

Count 3: Back to original position.

Repeat five times.





AIRPLANE HIP ROLL
(firms and reduces thighs)

Position: Lie flat on back, arms extended straight from shoulder, legs together on the floor.

Count 1: Raise right leg and with pivoting motion, touch foot to your left hand.

Count 2: Lower right leg to floor.

Count 3: Repeat with left leg to right hand.

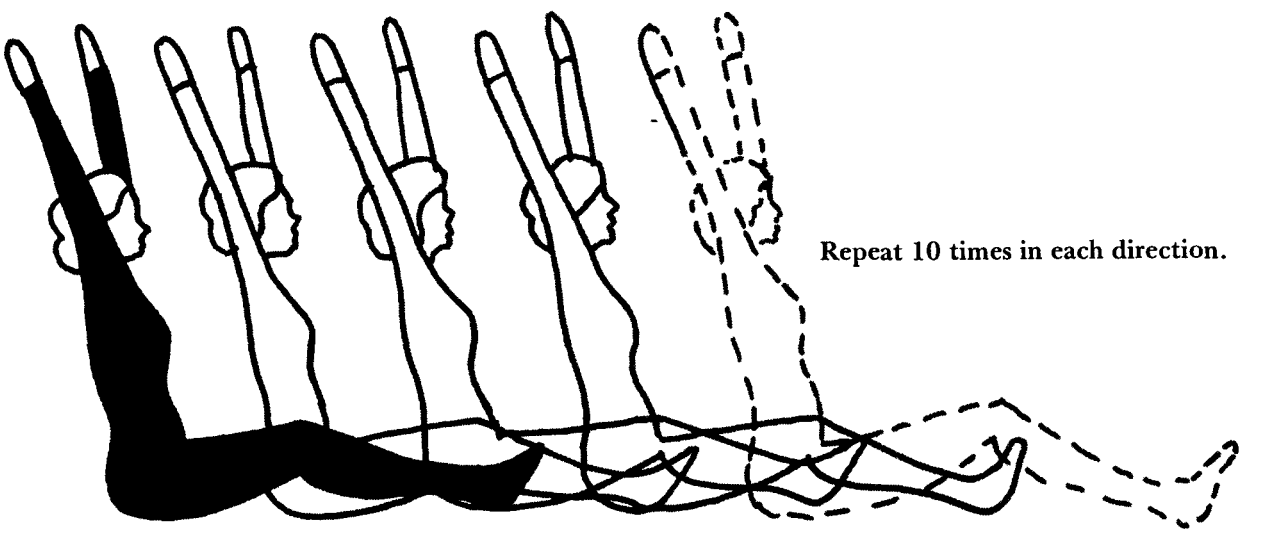
Count 4: Return left leg to floor. To do this exercise well, pivot on buttocks rather than using rolling motion, so that force is on the side hip and thigh.

DERRIERE DIMINISHER

Position: Sit on floor, legs stretched out in front of you, knees bent, and feet together, arms spread wide above your head.

Count to 10: "Walk" along floor 10 "steps," rolling one hip after the other. Keep shoulders straight.

Count to 10 again: "Walk" back 10 steps in the same position.

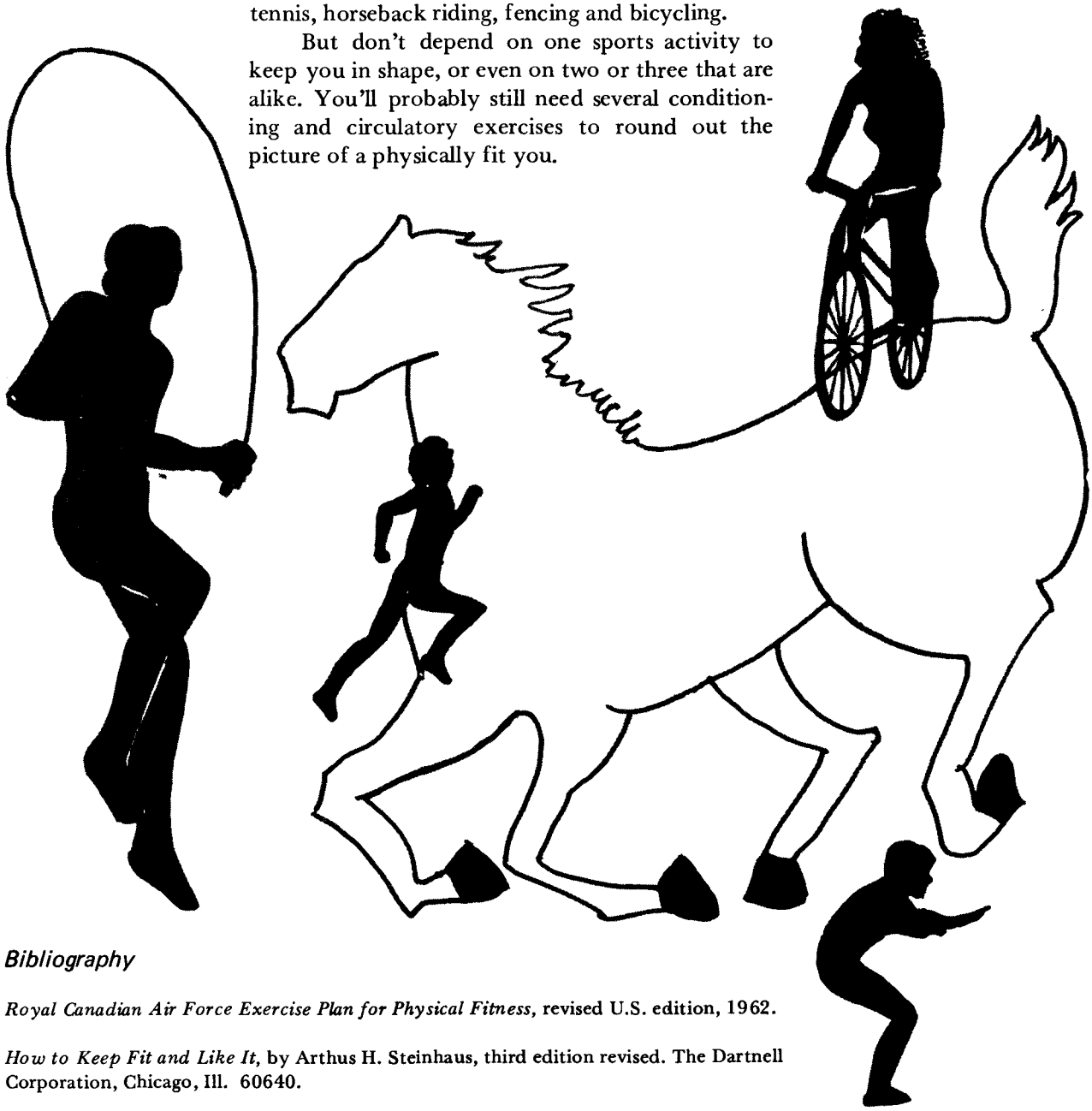


Repeat 10 times in each direction.

CIRCULATORY EXERCISES

Perhaps you'll find these exercises the most fun of all -- jumping rope, running, jogging, all good for conditioning the heart and lungs. Several sports activities that can do some of the same conditioning for you are strenuous swimming, tennis, horseback riding, fencing and bicycling.

But don't depend on one sports activity to keep you in shape, or even on two or three that are alike. You'll probably still need several conditioning and circulatory exercises to round out the picture of a physically fit you.



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How to Keep Fit and Like It, by Arthus H. Steinhaus, third edition revised. The Dartnell Corporation, Chicago, Ill. 60640.

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