ACSM: A Complete Activity Program for a Lifetime

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) is the largest sports medicine and exercise science organization in the world. ACSM recommendations include the following:

A well-rounded physical activity program includes aerobic exercise and strength training exercise. This blend helps maintain or improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness and overall health and function. Regular physical activity will provide more health benefits than sporadic, high intensity workouts, so choose exercises you are likely to enjoy and that you can incorporate into your schedule.

ACSM’s physical activity recommendations for healthy adults, updated in 2011, recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity (working hard enough to break a sweat, but still able to carry on a conversation) five days per week, or 20 minutes of more vigorous activity three days per week. Combinations of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity can be performed to meet this recommendation.

Aerobic Exercise--Examples of typical aerobic exercises are:
- Walking
- Running
- Stair climbing
- Cycling
- Rowing
- Cross-country skiing
- Swimming

Strength Training
- strength training should be performed a minimum of two days each week, with 8-12 repetitions of 8-10 different exercises that target all major muscle groups. This type of training can be accomplished using body weight, resistance bands, free weights, medicine balls or weight machines.

Flexibility Exercise
- Adults should do flexibility exercises at least two or three days each week to improve range of motion.

Neuromotor Exercise
- Neuromotor exercise (sometimes called “functional fitness training”) is recommended for two or three days per week.
- Exercises should involve motor skills (balance, agility, coordination)

Additional Guidance from ACSM

“It is no longer enough to consider whether an individual engages in adequate amounts of weekly exercise,” said Garber, who is an associate professor of movement sciences at the Teachers College of Columbia University. “We also need to determine how much time a person spends in sedentary pursuits, like watching television or working on a computer. Health-and-fitness professionals must be concerned with these activities as well.” Message: Encourage active lifestyles in addition to dedicated exercise. (Encourage the development of lifetime sport skills LB). Examples of an active lifestyle might include: walking or riding a bike instead of driving a car, establishing and pursuing recreational interests that are not sedentary (i.e. active sports and games, hiking, biking, gardening, etc.). Consider use of pedometers, fitbits, downloadable apps, etc. for measuring activity.