

FIT **FOR** FUN

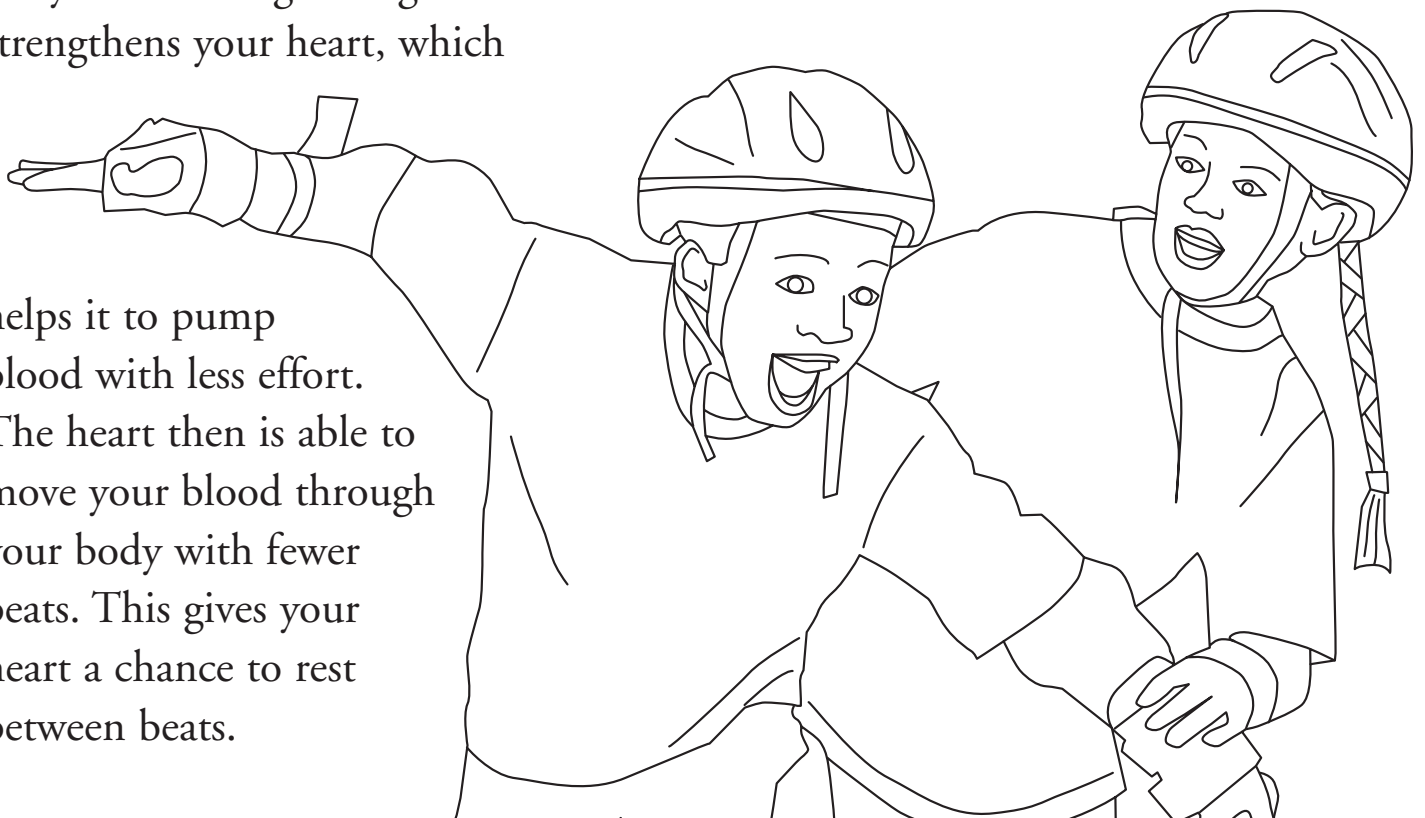
Are you an after-school, glued-to-the-tube-type dude? If this doesn't describe you, it probably describes someone you know. Let's look into the future of these couch potato people. You certainly won't see them on TV as the next great athlete. Of course, not everyone grows up to be a world-famous athlete.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



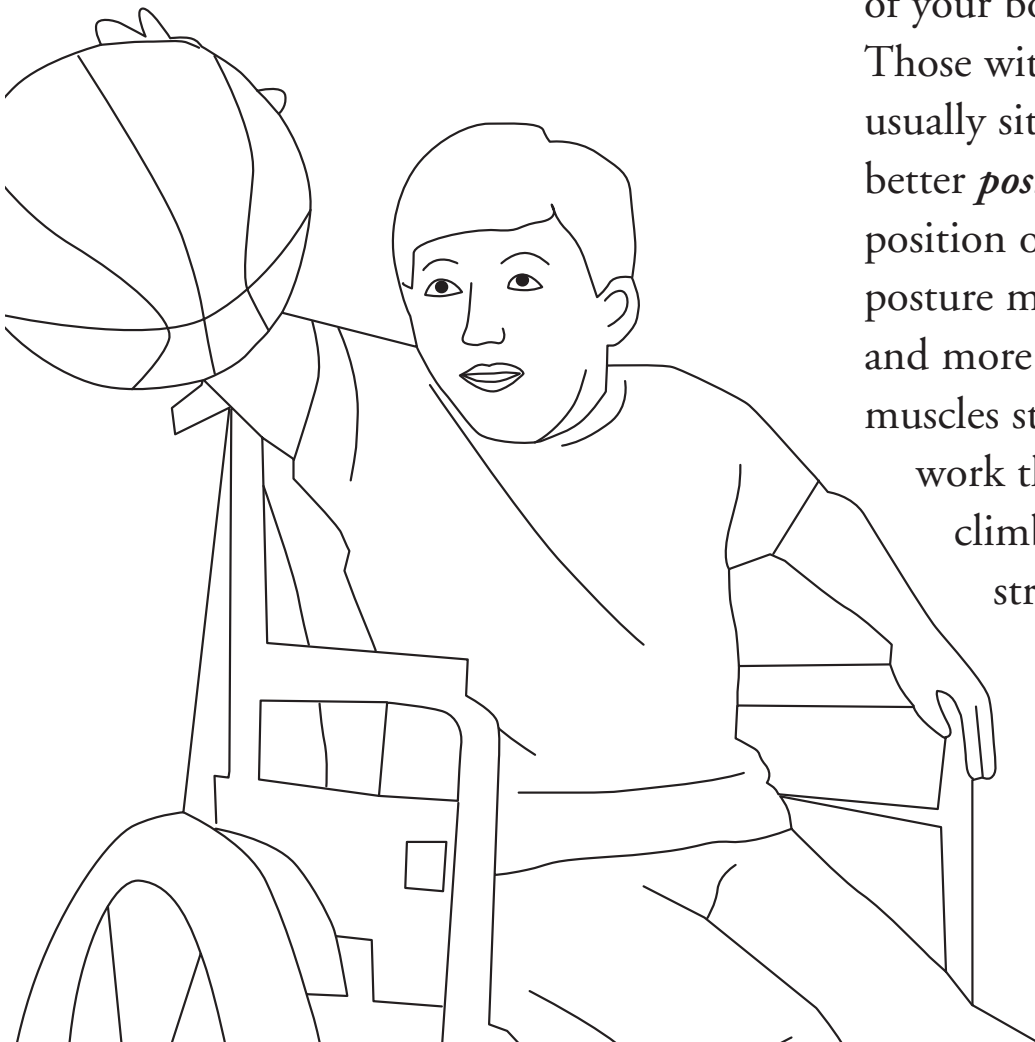
quicker your heart rate will return to its resting rate.

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.

