

# Putting Fitness Activities into Gymnastics Classes

*Patti Komara- www.tumblebear.com*

If children are getting type 2 diabetes and showing symptoms of hypertension and cardiovascular disease before they even reach puberty, the outlook for their lifespan is grim. Thinking about how to solve this crisis can take your breath away. It can be overwhelming to track the statistics on child health, watch them spiraling out of reach and try to figure what can we do? When you take a moment to consider all that we can do for all the kids who come into our gyms every day, it is important that we try to put fitness aspects and athletic development elements in our lesson plans. It's not that hard to do as directors, and it can be lots of FUN for the students! The easiest way is to use USAG's Fitnastics Program. Use it as a whole or take parts of it and use it as warm-up segments and pieces of curriculum for your gymnastics classes.

Remember:

**K** eep them moving- lots of cardio games; no down time

**I** magination- musical instruments; sports; animals; out of character; monsters

**D** iversity- jump rope, step, slide, stairs, treadmill, dancing, skipping, running

**S** tyle- create what feels good to you and makes them laugh and move!

## Exercise Physiology of Youth Fitness

The American College of Sports Medicine's "Opinion Statement on Physical Fitness in Children And Youth" recommends the primary goal should be to encourage the adoption of lifelong exercise that will foster physical fitness and health. The college recommends a minimum of 20-30 minutes of vigorous exercise a day.

1. Early cardio training can enhance athletic performance, improve body composition, lower the risk of cardiovascular disease and enhance the possibility of establishing a healthy adult lifestyle.
2. One difference between adults' and children's cardiovascular response to exercise is the amount of blood sent to the exercising muscle as compared to the amount sent to the other organs and tissues. In kids, a greater percentage of blood goes to the exercising muscle.
3. Some studies suggest that children may not be able to work as well anaerobically as adults—that they cannot handle as great a build-up of lactic acid. Don't let an exercise session become anaerobic. Keep their heart rates within a training range.
4. Some studies show that kids may be more susceptible than adults to heat injury. Appropriate clothing, good ventilation; water before and after the work-out (and during if it is a longer work-out) and avoidance of excessive exercise intensity can minimize the risks of thermal injury.
5. Significant losses in flexibility often accompany sharp growth spurts during which changes in bone length temporarily outreach changes in muscle length.
6. The American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine recommend no more than four strength training sessions per week and emphasize higher reps and lower loads.

In summary, young people respond well to physical training and can make great improvements in cardiovascular endurance, body composition, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. However, children should not be viewed as miniature adults. Rather, their physiologic and psychologic differences should be understood and carefully taken into consideration when designing a program.

## **Patti Komara's Bio**

Patti Komara has owned a gymnastics school in Dyer, Indiana since 1969 offering gymnastics, dance, swimming, and a fitness-based educational preschool called Gym-N-Learn. Patti began speaking at national seminars in 1981 and has led hundreds of training workshops. Patti's Tumblebear Connection has produced more than 80 instructional DVDs. She has written books on yearly lesson plans for The internationally known Tumblebear Gym Program, School-age Gymnastics, Dancing GymBears, YogaBears, CheerBears, Gym-N-Learn, and her very successful Swim Program. Patti co-authored the original USAG preschool KAT certification program. In 2003 she was named USAG Business Leader of the Year. In 2005 Patti was selected as Client of the Year by Action International and in 2006 was given the national service award by USAG. In 2009 Patti began formal consulting for those in our industry and in 2010 her gym, Patti's All-American, was named in her local newspaper as "Best of the Region" once again. Patti has over 6000 subscribers to her "In the Loop Monthly E-Newsletter" which she has published since February 2007.