Most people aren’t competitive athletes but aim to exercise regularly to improve their quality of life.

Functional fitness exercises help them achieve that goal. With a strong focus on using one’s entire body at once, functional fitness stimulates common movements you would do at home, at work or in sports.

“Functional fitness exercises are designed to train and develop your muscles to make it easier and safer to perform everyday tasks, such as carrying groceries or throwing a Frisbee with the kids,” explains Amy Goldwater, a fitness educator and former body building champion.

In the beginning, individuals should consider only using their own body weight for resistance, slowly adding weight and increasing the intensity level as their fitness ability improves.

An example of a functional fitness exercise is the squat-to-bicep curl. Start with your feet shoulder-width apart, spine straight and core stable. Holding dumbbells at your sides, slowly bend through the hips, knees and ankles until your knees reach a 90-degree angle. As you slowly return to the starting position, turn your palms toward the ceiling, flex your arms and curl the dumbbells toward your shoulders.

The squat-to-bicep curl is a form of functional fitness, because it trains the muscles that are used to pick up an object — a laundry basket or young child — from the floor.

Benefits include reducing the risk of injury — preparing your body to adjust to life's unexpected twists and turns and training your body to perform daily activities — walking, bending, lifting, climbing stairs and more — without pain or discomfort.