

## Ancient Greek

Perhaps no other civilization has held fitness in such high regard as ancient Greece. This civilization's appreciation of the body and focus on health and fitness are unparalleled in history. The Greeks believed that development of the body was equally as important as development of the mind. Facilitating the growth of fitness were Greek medical practitioners, such as Herodicus, Hippocrates and Galen.

Gymnastics, along with music, were considered vital to the education of all Greeks. In fact, a common saying in ancient Greek times was "exercise for the body and music for the soul" (Wuest & Bucher 1995). In Athens, gymnastics took place in indoor facilities called *palaestras* (the precursors to health clubs) and were supervised by a *paidotribe* (similar to today's personal fitness trainer). In Sparta, the government imposed special fitness programs for its male children to ensure they would become highly fit adult soldiers. Females were required to maintain good physical condition in order to produce healthy male offspring who could serve the state. The military-dominated culture of Sparta resulted in one of the most physically fit societies in the history of mankind.