

Fall Prevention Through Physical Activity

IT'S A FACT

Falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries among senior Canadians and account for more than half of all injuries among seniors. When we were young, falls seemed to be a natural part of life, but as we age, falls can be life threatening. Falls represent a major threat to the health and independence of older adults. In fact, falling is associated with loss of independence, death, disability, and premature admission to long term care.

The good news is that certain risk factors for falling can be eliminated and others considerably reduced by simple prevention measures.



Approximately 35% to 40% of generally **healthy older adults** age 65+ living in the community have a fall each year.

Falls are the most preventable health risk to senior Canadians.



Risk Factors for Falling

- History of falls in the past year
- Muscle weakness
- Gait changes
- Balance difficulties
- Four or more prescription medications
- Improper use of walking aids
- Visual disorders
- Arthritis, stroke, Parkinson's disease
- Difficulty performing activities of daily living (example: bathing, toileting)
- Depression
- Cognitive impairment
- Over the age of 80

The risk of falling can be significantly reduced with interventions that include balance training and muscle strengthening exercises.

Physical Activity & Fall Prevention

- Exercise helps to prevent falls by improving balance, coordination, and strength, which in turn increase independence.
- Even if you begin later in life, physical activity can result in significant health improvements.
- Physical activity can increase joint mobility, improve heart and lung function, and build stronger bones and muscles.
- As our body ages, our bone density decreases and our bones become more porous, contributing to increased risk of fractures.
- Adequate calcium and Vitamin D are necessary for maintaining strong bones and muscles. Vitamin D is necessary for the absorption of calcium. It is suggested that adults over the age of 51 should have between 1200-1500 mg of calcium daily and between 400-800 IU of Vitamin D daily.



Make sure to consult your physician or health care professional before starting any new type of physical activity.

What Kind of Activity is Best?

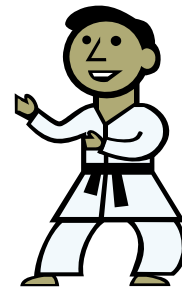
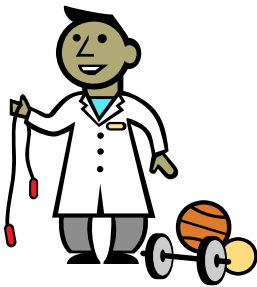
Activities that affect bone and muscle mass:

- **Weight bearing exercise**
This is any type of exercise where your muscles are working against gravity. This will help to maintain muscle and bone strength. Examples of weight bearing exercises include walking, jogging, dancing, and climbing stairs.
- **Resistance exercise**
This is any type of exercise where you are moving objects such as weights and therabands to create resistance. Resistance training has the ability to increase muscle size, strength, and power in older adults.
- **Activities that improve balance, coordination, and flexibility**
Balance training can improve safe mobility and flexibility exercises can improve range of motion. A great example is Tai Chi. Tai Chi can reduce the risk for falls by improving balance, coordination, and flexibility.

*For more information and references used contact *in motion* (306)655-DoIt or visit www.in-motion.ca/Older Adults

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