

Exercise and Frailty

Frailty is a common clinical syndrome in older adults that carries an increased risk for poor health outcomes including falls, incident disability, hospitalization, and mortality. This is due to the individual's decline in reserve and function across multiple physiological systems, resulting in the person's inability to withstand environmental stressors. Frailty is often assumed to be an inevitable consequence of aging, but in recent years, increased physical activity or regular exercise training has been shown to be a good preventive strategy for frailty.



In Hong Kong



According to an HKU survey of 1,892 community-dwelling older persons aged 65 years or above, 40% of older persons are pre-frail and over 10% frail, suggesting it as a very common problem among Hong Kong elderly.

Why Can Exercise Help?



Regular physical activity can help significantly to reduce the number of risk factors and improves function and health through increased balance confidence, improved muscular strength balance, increased walking speed and improved mental ability and mood. Furthermore, structured exercise training has a positive impact on frail older adults.

Exercise Recommendations

Aerobic Exercise



Be active on most days of the week and at least two to three days per week



Accumulated ≥ 30 -45 minutes of exercise at a fairly light to moderate level



Walking or aerobic chair exercise and maintain the exercise habit for more than 5 months

Resistance Training



Do resistance training two or three times per week



Exercise at a moderate level



Target to finish 1-2 Sets of 10-15 Reps for each exercise, accumulating ≥ 30 -45 minutes



Begin with light resistance, targeting major muscle groups, maintain for at least 5 months

A combination of aerobic and resistance training leads to the BEST health outcomes

Tips for Getting Started

- Avoid exercise if you have an active infection, extreme fatigue or just after surgery. Talk with your health care provider and exercise specialist in advance if you have any concerns.
- Whilst exercising, switch between seated and standing exercises to avoid long periods of standing.
- Make sure the venue is safe for exercise and a safety handrail is provided for supporting the older adult when needed.

References

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