

Raising the bar on
strength and balance

Maintaining & improving strength and balance

We know that poor muscle strength and balance are the two most common modifiable risk factors for falls. We also know that falls have a huge impact on people who can lose mobility and confidence to keep doing things on their own after having a fall and often end up requiring more hospital and social care.

Every year there are over 210,000 falls-related emergency hospital admissions among people aged 65 and older in England. It is estimated that falls cost the NHS around £1 billion a year.

NHS rehabilitation services that provide strength and balance programmes are often of limited length. It is essential that there are effective community-based strength and balance programmes for people to move on to in their local areas.

Sharing the evidence

Raising awareness of the risk of falls as well as what older people can do to prevent them is an important part of engaging local populations and increasing uptake of community-based strength and balance programmes.

The evidence that funding strength and balance programmes in the community is cost effective is clear, yet such programmes are often underfunded and there is a significant difference between what the evidence says and what is delivered on the ground.

The Centre for Ageing Better commissioned the University of Manchester to bridge the gap between evidence and practice and to work directly with communities to better understand their local challenges and to identify practical examples of doing things differently. The findings have been organised into five themes that ensure strength and balance programmes are delivered effectively so that older adults achieve positive results.


This leaflet is a summary of the full report **Raising the bar on strength and balance**



[ageing-better.org.uk/
strength-balance](https://ageing-better.org.uk/strength-balance)



The types of physical activities that are most effective at improving muscle function, bone health and balance.

Type of sport, physical activity or exercise	 Improvement in muscle function	 Improvement in bone health	 Improvement in balance
 Running	★	★★	★
 Resistance Training	★★★	★★★	★★
 Aerobics, circuit training	★★★	★★★	★★
 Ball Games	★★	★★★	★★★
 Racquet Sports	★★	★★★	★★★
 Yoga, Tai Chi	★	★	★
 Dance	★	★★	★
 Walking	★	★	☆
 Nordic Walking	★★	?	★★
 Cycling	★	★	★

★★★ Strong effect
 ★★ Medium effect
 ★ Low effect
 ☆ No effect
 ? Not known

Table originally published in Foster, C. and Armstrong, M. (2018), 'What types of physical activities are effective in developing muscle and bone strength and balance?', Journal of Frailty, Sarcopenia & Falls, Vol. 3(No.2), pp. 58-65.

Five ways to increase uptake and provision



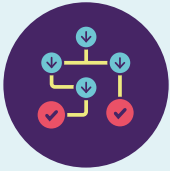
1

Raising awareness



2

Encouraging uptake



3

Exercise referral pathways that work



4

Sticking to the evidence



5

Monitoring for outcomes and improvement

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- ✓ Fund and develop marketing campaigns
 - ✓ Tailor messages for target audiences
 - ✓ Make sessions appealing
 - ✓ Develop peer champions
 - ✓ Work across stakeholder groups

- ✓ Challenge negative beliefs
- ✓ Person-centred goals to increase motivation
- ✓ Build relationships across organisations
- ✓ Exercise sessions – something for everyone
- ✓ Address barriers and provide solutions

- ✓ Develop referral pathways collaboratively
- ✓ Share pathways throughout local networks
- ✓ Provide good assessments for appropriate referrals
- ✓ A recommendation is not the same as a referral
- ✓ Successful exercise referral pathways across England

- ✓ Provide person-centred assessment
- ✓ Supplementary home exercise for success
- ✓ Tailor programmes for individual progress
- ✓ Moving on to other programmes/activities
- ✓ Support instructors to deliver the evidence

- ✓ Create a monitoring framework
- ✓ What to include to capture success
- ✓ Identify tools for assessment and monitoring progression
- ✓ Digital tools for monitoring progress and recording outcomes
- ✓ Make the most of data



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The Centre for Ageing Better received £50 million from The National Lottery Community Fund in January 2015 in the form of an endowment to enable it to identify what works in the ageing sector by bridging the gap between research, evidence and practice.