

News story: Major health benefits from strengthening and balance activity

An [evidence review commissioned by Public Health England and the Centre for Ageing Better](#) has found that muscle and bone strengthening and balance activities continue to have great health benefits for all adults, including older adults aged 65 years and over.

In older adults, poor muscle strength increases the risk of a fall by 76% and those who have already had a fall are three times more likely to fall again. Strengthening and balance activities not only help to prevent this, but also help improve your mood, sleeping patterns, increase your energy levels and reduce the risk of an early death.

Activities found to have the most benefit for muscle and bone strengthening include:

- ball games
- racket sports
- dance
- Nordic walking
- resistance training (usually training with weights, but including body weight exercises which can be performed anywhere)

The review underlines the importance of the UK CMO's guidance that all adults need to undertake strengthening and balance activities suitable for them at least twice per week in order to maintain and improve health.

For those at risk of falls or fracture, supervised structured exercise is also recommended at a pace that suits the individual to help maintain independence and support healthy ageing.

Dr Alison Tedstone, Head of Diet, Obesity and Physical Activity at PHE, said:

Alongside aerobic exercise such as brisk walking, all adults should be aiming to do strengthening and balancing activities twice per week. On average we're all living longer and this mixture of physical activities will help us stay well in our youth and remain independent as we age.

It can also help ease those difficult or life-changing moments like pregnancy, menopause, onset of or diagnosis of disease, retirement and recovery from hospitalisation.

Jess Kuehne, Senior Engagement Manager, Centre for Ageing Better added:

It's clear that we need to give equal weighting to activities that

boost muscle and bone strength and improve balance rather than simply focusing on aerobic exercise.

There is significant potential to make savings to health and social care services if we do more to promote muscle strengthening and balance activities and recognise their role in helping to keep people healthy and independent for longer, particularly as they age.

Current statistics show that falls are responsible for around 95% of all hip fractures, costing the NHS over £1 billion per year.

For employers and the economy, musculoskeletal health conditions are the second most common cause of sickness absence in the UK, accounting for 30.8 million days lost in work.

By building on aerobic activities such as brisk walking, strengthening and balance activities such as dancing or tennis can help adults to prevent these health problems and enjoy ageing well.